



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClínPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

- This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
- A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
- This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
- The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
- When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

**Renewing Old Acquaintances: The Conflation of Critical  
and Translational Paths in the Anglo-American  
Reception of Mercè Rodoreda, Esther Tusquets, and  
Rosa Montero**

**Helena Miguélez-Carballeira**

**Thesis submitted to The University of Edinburgh  
For the degree of  
Doctor in Philosophy  
In Hispanic Studies**

**The University of Edinburgh  
April 2005**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Andrew Ginger warmly for his help and close guidance throughout these four years, and Dr Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva, whose work and supervision provided an unexpected, yet eagerly awaited stimulus to my research.

My thanks are also due to Christopher Monahan, who went through the often strenuous effort of always trying to understand what I mean, and to Dr María Filippakopoulou, Rosalía R. Vázquez, and Athanasía Theodoropoulou, for their stimulating work and uplifting friendship.

First and foremost, this thesis is entirely dedicated to my family, whose kindness continues to be an all-pervading inspiration in my life, and to the memory of my grandfather, *meu padriño*, Francisco Carballeira.

## ABSTRACT

The thesis looks at the patterns, tendencies, and tensions that characterise the Anglo-American critical reception of the three peninsular woman authors Mercè Rodoreda, Esther Tusquets, and Rosa Montero, generally assigned a representative role as feminist writers in the field of gender-centred Hispanism. The study begins with the recognition that there has been an increase in the level of awareness as to certain recurrent mechanisms of academic Hispanism in America, as is proved by the recent burgeoning of studies with an avowed metacritical slant. My analysis partakes in this trend but integrates also translational analysis, with a view to showing the validity of translated texts as critical artefacts, informed by similar operations and leanings. Ultimately, my aim is to shed light on the often downplayed complexities characterising ideologically inflected instances of cultural reception and diffusion, of which the Anglo-American critical response to women-authored, contemporary narrative in Spain is a case in point.

In the thesis I try to make evident two aspects of this diffusion. First, that critical enquiry around these authors is fuelled by an ever-present negotiation around the true feminist valence of their work. As a result, questions of wishful anticipation on the part of the critics or the much-referred clash between Spanish authors and Anglo-American scholars as regards their attitude towards the feminist label, have at times precluded less jaundiced readings. Second, that it was nevertheless the critics' emphasis on the original works' feminist worth that initially brought them to the fore, nourished scholarly dialogue on them for more than two decades now, and yielded the English translations of some of their novels. The thesis attempts to show, by contrast, that this last stage of the process of dissemination (that is, the translated texts) is at variance with the claims adduced in the secondary literature, despite the claims of 'concertedness' expounded in paratextual material and the editorial milieus that supported their publication. Specifically, the feminist value underscored by critics is substantially neutralised by dint of a variety of translational strategies that this study aims to disclose. By combining metacritical and translational forms of analysis, the study of these particular paths of critical reception is thus rendered more complex and aims to problematise the apparent transparency implicit in the international movement of cultural goods.



<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: MERCÈ RODOREDÀ LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL: PARALLELS, INTERSECTIONS, AND DIVERGENCES ACROSS RODOREDÀ SCHOLARSHIP</b>	<b>29</b>
1.1 The Persistent Schism between Catalan and Anglo-American Scholarship on Mercè Rodoredà	31
1.1.1 Rodoredà and Feminism	39
1.1.2 Mercè Rodoredà: Novelist or Multifaceted Artist?	49
1.2 Assessing the Consequences of the Schism: The Lights and Shadows of Anglo-American Scholarship on Rodoredà	61
1.3 Conclusion	70
<b>CHAPTER 2: MERCÈ RODOREDÀ IN TRANSLATION: SIDES AND UNDERSIDES OF DAVID ROSENTHAL'S TRANSLATIONAL PROJECT</b>	<b>73</b>
2.1 Structural Re-arrangements: Selection, Chronology, and Paratext	75
2.2 Textual Figurations: Transatlantic Echoes of a Woman's Voice	81
2.2.1 Class and Education in Rodoredà's Women Narrators	82
2.2.2 Sites of Confinement: Detail, Domesticity, and the Duplicitous Charge of 'Femininity'	90
2.2.3 Infantilised Women: Infantilised Speech	96
2.3 Conclusion	106
<b>CHAPTER 3: ESTHER TUSQUETS AND THE ENTRAPMENT OF RHETORIC</b>	<b>109</b>
3.1 Stylistic Concern in Tusquets and Benet: Approaching the Poetical	116
3.2 Esther Tusquets and <i>Écriture Féminine</i>	125
3.3 Love is a Literary Game: The Literary and the Fake in Tusquets's Novels	133
3.4 Conclusion	143
<b>CHAPTER 4: ESTHER TUSQUETS IN TRANSLATION: CONTINUITY AND DISLOCATION IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF HER TETRALOGY</b>	<b>146</b>
4.1 An Attempt at Continuity: The Translations of Margaret E.W. Jones, Susan E. Clark, and Barbara Ichiishi	151
4.2 Elements of Disruption: Style and Sexuality in Bruce Penman's Translation	163
4.2.1 Syntax and Punctuation in <i>Love is a Solitary Game</i> : Strategies for the Organisation of Information	166
4.2.2 Repetition	171
4.2.3 Poetic Language and Rhetoric Style	175
4.2.4 Translating Female Sexuality	181
4.3 Conclusion	188
<b>CHAPTER 5: ROSA MONTERO OR THE PERPETUAL FEMINIST: ALLEGATIONS OLD AND NEW ABOUT AND AGAINST HER EARLY NARRATIVE</b>	<b>190</b>
5.1 Rosa Montero and Feminism: The Question of Feminine Writing	198

5.2 Journalism and Fiction: The Construction of a Veracious Reality	209
5.3 The Construction of Irony: Defamiliarisation and Critique in <i>Crónica del desamor</i>	216
5.3.1 Stylistic Clashes	222
5.3.2 Irony through Conflicts of Belief	226
5.4 Conclusion	231
<b>CHAPTER 6: ROSA MONTERO IN TRANSLATION: TOWARDS AN ELUCIDATION OF READER IDENTIFICATION</b>	<b>234</b>
6.1 Reader Identification through Ironic Discourse: A Translational Analysis	238
6.1.1 Irony through Stylistic Mismatches	241
6.1.2 Irony through Semantic and Morphological Displacement	243
6.1.3 Ironising Patriarchal Language	247
6.2 Reader Identification through Cultural Proximity	250
6.3.1 <i>Cotidianidad</i> and Trademarks in <i>Crónica del desamor</i> : The Construction of a National Routine	252
6.3.2 The Construction of a Woman's Routine	257
6.4 Reader Identification through the Treatment of Sexuality	259
6.5 Conclusion	265
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>CITED REFERENCES</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>299</b>

## Introduction

In the years 1983 and 1984, two curious studies were published within the emerging field of feminist studies, and obliquely feminist Hispanism, which boldly addressed the issues surveyed in this thesis. Linda E. Chown's article "American Critics and Spanish Women Novelists, 1942-1980" (1983) and the volume *Women Writers in Translation: an Annotated Bibliography*, edited by Margery Resnick and Isabelle de Courtivron (1984), sprang from a clear critical aim and cultivated a lexicon where words such as 'appropriation', 'misconception', and 'selection' featured prominently, and which is, after two decades, still most pertinent today.

Linda Chown's article records the problematical lack of rapport between American critics and Spanish women writers, with an eye to the instances of mismatched figurations, frustrations and disappointment with which this encounter is fraught. As such, her article is one of the first extensive metacritical analyses of this subject to emerge within Hispanism. It offers a clear historical review of studies dealing with Spanish women authors produced in American universities, going from the somewhat apologetic, pioneering works of the fifties to the gradually more visibly feminist, yet rather rigid readings by up-and-coming critics in the seventies. Her aim was subsequently to focus on the possible causes for distortion informing this dialogue, centring on three sites of tension: first, what she describes as the "different assumptions about the importance of the physical world" (Chown 1983: 96), and the frequency with which the sense of inward change and improvement usually achieved by the heroines of Spanish novels is often overlooked by the more socially oriented theories of feminist progress informing American criticism. Linked with this shortcoming is Chown's second posited cause for critical misprision, namely American critics' "culturally inherited presuppositions about solitude, time, and the right to progress" (Chown 1983: 98), which on occasions precludes a positive appraisal of the female characters' differing experience of these concepts. To put it in Chown's own words:

We tend to believe that solitude is a sign of loneliness, that time is linear, that progress and, with luck, perfection and social metamorphosis are our right. Our vision of liberation for women very often presupposes work, creation, activity, and the right to change. However, as a consequence of our wholehearted faith in these goals, American readings frequently disparage novels in which the invisible action does not correspond to such a vision. (Chown 1983: 98)

One last conceptual space where American critics' ideological leanings impede more accommodating readings of Spanish women-centred novels is, Chown proposes, that of images of womanhood. Again, Spanish women's sense of autonomy and development may not be traceable in the camps of sociology, economy or law but in a more intimate space (Chown suggests the adjective 'moral'), where improvement is gauged by individual parameters. Though Chown does not mention the words, I believe an understanding of the concepts of resignation or self-sacrifice as are practised by female characters in Spanish novels plays a decisive role for the plausibility of her argument. In other words, where American women would seek measurable progress in the form of tangible social change, activism and success, Spanish women would content themselves with a well-deserved sense of inner peace. Although this correlation rests, by its very scale, on a gross generalisation, Chown's argument proceeds to making a highly valid point in metacritical terms, namely that:

Above all, we need to avoid projecting our expectations and values upon Spanish heroines. That practice results in the greatest limitation of our criticism to date: we remain too critical of Spanish men, women, customs, goals, beliefs, and assumptions. Although we cannot push a button and shed automatically the culturally inherited assumptions that inhibit our understanding of the Spanish novel, we can at least become more fully aware of them and attempt to compensate for them by keeping in mind those peculiarly Spanish notions that govern and shape the world as Spanish women live and see it. (Chown 1983: 102)

By way of conclusion, Chown calls for a greater versatility and tolerance in feminist literary criticism, for a scholarly idiom that will not simply fulfil a prescriptive, benchmarking purpose but which will explore the potential for progress as is culturally stipulated in different countries. Again, her final statement is worth quoting in full:

It is to be hoped that critics of foreign literatures will approach these literatures with a questioning spirit, that a feminist response to Spanish fiction specifically will be open and courageous enough to perceive and, more importantly, respect the particular, peculiar ways that Spanish women inherit, modify, and break free of their own moral and cultural givens. When that happens, when we are able to challenge ourselves and

our fixed habits of thinking, we will be, in the deepest sense, liberating ourselves.  
(Chown 1983: 107)

The work of Margery Resnick and Isabelle de Courtivron aimed to compile a substantial amount of women-authored works in English translation, with the intention of shedding light on an aspect of women's literature's international diffusion that had not, until then, received sufficient critical attention. Starting with the view that the translation of women-authored literature is in itself a politically-minded move, whereby historically silenced literary voices are incorporated into a receiving culture which is thus expanded, the editors set out to gather pertinent details about English translations from a wide range of source languages (including Portuguese, French, Russian, German, and Italian). In the section devoted to Spanish literature (Resnick and de Courtivron 1984: 211-226), pithy commentary is offered on the substandard literary status to which Spanish women authors are relegated and the often-hostile reception they trigger in their country of origin. More importantly, their analysis of the bulk of translated works also helps shed light on the paths for international reception, as signs of both disregard for, or significant selection of, the original novels have marked the translational movement. As they observe: "The scarcity of titles in this section, as well as the predominance of religious writing from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is sobering" (Resnick and de Courtivron 1984: 211). Their work is therefore simply not one of reference or encyclopaedic value, as the compilation and study of translated texts is not the only object, but the tool with which to investigate the properties of a process of transmission. Their elucidation of the frictions characterising this process, reproduced below, is thus made possible by their analysis of what has and has not been translated into English:

Not until this century, with its vast changes wrought by social and historical upheavals, has a constellation of women writers in Spain emerged. However, very few of these novelists, essayists and poets have been translated into English. As women they share with almost all the female writers the lack of recognition by critics and the lack of influence over the publishing interest that determine what will be made available to an English-speaking audience. As Spaniards, they automatically acquire a sense of remoteness, an aura of distance from European intellectual life, with which Americans have constantly viewed Spanish culture. The attitudes created by the ignorance of and disinterest in Spanish culture have inevitably resulted in the absence of works in translation. (Marks and de Courtivron 1984: 211)

In the preface to the volume, the editors formulate a summons similar to Linda Chown's and appeal for further studies of this type. More specifically, they underscore the neglected importance of translated texts as legitimate objects of study when they say: "We hope this data will be a starting point for studies in a field that is richly deserving of thoughtful, informed, and committed exploration" (Marks and de Courtivron 1984: viii). Although this point is never pressed again in their study, I believe Resnick and de Courtivron's compilation is an early example of how the study of translations can throw light on the often meandering routes of intercultural exportation, diffusion and reception, itself a defined maxim of translation studies as it was to develop in the eighties and nineties.

Despite their pioneering claims, however, these works, particularly the second one, have triggered scanty critical echoes and an even more meagre practical implementation of the shifts and reforms they championed. Methodologically, the present thesis owes a great deal to their precursory value and participates in a similar analytical thrust to theirs: Crucial to my study is also the articulation of a linkage between each of these works' particular scope, namely the metacritical and the translational, with a view to elucidating the mutually enriching rapport between them and the commanding analytical tool resulting from this intersection. The overall product aims to be a critical artefact of a hybridised kind, with a foot in the more or less established fields of literary criticism and translation studies, but also in the fluctuating scopes of comparative cultural studies and reception theories.

Conceptually, the claims in these two studies, especially the questions the authors raise as to the prejudiced rapport between Spanish women-centred narratives and Anglo-American critics, seem recently to have become a cause of concern. In the 2003 issue of *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea*, one of the most prominent periodicals in Hispanism, published by The University of Nebraska, two succinct articles by critics Roberta Johnson and Randolph Pope preface the rest of the volume. In the first one, entitled "Spanish Feminist Theory Then and Now", Roberta Johnson elaborates on a series of critical trends detected after perusing a significant number of articles on feminist Hispanism published in North-American periodicals since 1980. Among the tendencies identified, a propensity to support studies with the

work of French and North American theorists features prominently, possibly attributable to critics' underlying will to legitimise their object of study by force of more or less subtle name-dropping or, as Johnson puts it, "window-dressing" (Johnson 2003: 14). By invoking the claims in Linda Chown's article, Johnson maintains that this tendency has dominated the bulk of feminist Hispanism coming from American institutions for some thirty years, and puzzles over the problem of whether "Spanish feminist criticism has become a de facto colony of Anglo-American feminist scholarship" (Johnson: 13). In her own words:

Chown's admonitions apparently had no effect. Since the publication of her article in 1983, Anglo-American feminist models and references have multiplied in work by U.S. Hispanist critics. [...] Toward the end of her article Chown suggests that we consider Spanish feminist scholarship in U.S. studies of Spanish literature [...] but to date I have not noted any rush to follow Chown's advice. (Johnson 2003: 14)

Johnson's overall aim is to expose and address this tendency head-on, and finally to call for greater critical recourse to Spanish feminist theorists with a view to producing research that is approximal (in the sense of 'coming closer to its object of study'), and integrative of autochthonous idioms. By adopting this renewed approach, the distancing that characterises much of American feminist Hispanism, together with the somewhat awkward interpretative acrobatics this stance has occasionally yielded, could finally be reduced.

Randolph Pope's article addresses the same issue as Johnson's more broadly, without specific reference to feminist research. His aim is to question the validity of international theoretical apparatuses (such as those orbiting the sonorous names of Derrida, Irigaray, Bhabha or Said) when it comes to probing into Hispanic letters. Again, the point is pressed for a more attentive integration of theoretical and philosophical peninsular idioms, which have patently not been given their due in U.S. Hispanism. As he carefully puts it:

I am not proposing any sort of *crítica castiza*, which I would find especially inappropriate to the present moment of multiculturalism and globalization. [...] My lament is that we are, on the one hand, borrowing problems and issues from theoretical works that respond to a different experience to the one from where the Spanish novels we study originate, and, second, that the creative and complex thought, for example on the topic of nationalities and political power, taking place now in Spain, say by philosophers such as Rupert de Ventós and Fernando Savater, is not being

incorporated enough in our work so that it becomes known beyond Hispanism in this country. (Pope 2003: 23-24)

What these two recent publications, together with a numbers of others where analogous anxieties are voiced (see for instance Paul Julian Smith and Emilie Bergman's introduction to their *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, 1995), seem to indicate is that there has been an increase in the level of awareness as to the recurrent mechanisms of academic Hispanism in America and as to the sense of stasis that they have partly yielded. In other words, the breach has become more and more ineludible between the discipline's object of study (Spanish literature) and the tools utilised to investigate it (tools that can be both the critic's personal socio-cultural and institutional enclave, as was the nub of Chown's early argument, or the prestigious theoretical bases applied, as Johnson and Pope suggested). Similar preoccupations have also been articulated within the field of Latin American studies (D'Allemand 2000). In general, this critical predisposition to retrofit the object of study into an existent set of tools that is also conveniently at hand, has served its purpose, as Johnson put it (2003: 18). It has made Hispanic studies come into relief within the complex grid conformed by university modern-language departments today, characterised by relatively rapid shifts in critical trends and demands. As regards the gender-centred strand, "it introduced Hispanism to feminist criticism at a time when our graduate departments and the departments in which we took our first jobs were not conducive to undertaking this kind of research" (Johnson 2003: 18). However, after this "thirty-year apprenticeship" (Johnson 2003: 18), a need to strike a consensus between the body of cultural and literary objects under scrutiny and scholars' very critical gaze is in order, if a more capacious and expansive dialogue is to develop.

It is to the prospect of this dialogue that this thesis is aimed to contribute. Moreover, my study begins with the appreciation that the conflict explained above can be detected in the space generated by the critical intersection between gender studies and Hispanism. A brief review of a number of recent articles may help demonstrate this point.

The study of lesbian literary discourse in Spain has been a persistent *cause célèbre* in Anglo-American Hispanism. A considerable number of studies have repeatedly



addressed the seemingly irritating frequency with which arguably lesbian-identified authors opt for diffuse forms of self-representation or characterisation, to the extent that their narratives retain an aura of repression or defeat that renders them self-cancelling as potential works of subversion. The work of Brad Epps on Carme Riera (1995) or, as we shall see, a large section of criticism on Esther Tusquets, are intended to denounce this state of affairs. To single out one from a multitude, I propose the following analysis of Sandra Kingery's article 'Silencing Lesbian Desire in Ana María Moix's "Dedicatoria"' (2003), published in the feminist periodical *Letras femeninas*. This study begins with the widely accepted fact that Moix's texts are of value to the feminist critic for "their woman-centered (at times, lesbian) themes, postmodern narrative stances, varying voices and time frames, and genre-bending transgressions of traditional literary boundaries" (Kingery 2003: 45). A set of interpretative expectations is thus generated with which critics often approach the text, only finally to have to collide with these narratives' baffling, ultimate disavowal of any previous potential indicator of gender transgression. Focusing on the short story in hand, Kingery builds on a series of textual traces that indicate "Dedicatoria" is a narrative of lesbian desire. Among these indicators, her investigation of the biographical link between Moix and Esther Tusquets and of the many mutual references these authors have covertly integrated into their literary work, thus suffusing their narratives with a kind of private-joke playfulness, is intended to demonstrate that "Dedicatoria" is, above all, a love letter from Ana María Moix to the older, mentor-like Tusquets. However, the final narratorial switch from an implicitly understood, first-person female narrator to an unequivocally male one, leaves the reader at a loss for extra referential clues. More importantly, the story's subversive power, implicit all along and imbricated in its apparent lesbian connotation, is bluntly severed. Kingery formulates her deductions by addressing the self-harming contradiction represented by this text. What could have stood as a richly duplicitous narrative of gender-oriented countercurrents is briskly turned into a mainstream text of hidebound values. She takes this line of argument one stage further by insinuating that it is the problematic socio-cultural environs in which this

type of narrative is produced that puts a strain in the author's creative freedom. As Kingery put it:

In a lesbian story, the substitution of a male narrator for one of the female protagonists eliminates both the female voice and the homosexual perspective and thus resurrects the "reassuring presence of both masculinity and heterosexuality" (Epps 342). Of course one must afford "proper respect to the desire of writers (specifically lesbian writers) to protect themselves from the dubious benefits of visibility" (Smith and Bergmann 2). Still, it is interesting to note the causes for and consequences of this heterosexualizing of a lesbian reality. (Kingery 2003: 52)

The sense of disenchantment permeating Kingery's article is a current phenomenon detectable across gender-centred strands of Anglo-American Hispanism that would repay further study. Some possible reasons for this phenomenon will come into view as we move along. Let us now turn to a further study where tensions such as those underlying the one above are more vehemently put. Kathleen M. Glenn's 2001 article on Carme Riera's short fiction addresses from the outset the increasing friction between Spanish women authors and Anglo-American scholars, as regards their authorial positioning as both creators and interpreters respectively. The case is made for what appears to have developed as a specifically Spanish diatribe, namely the one fostered by Spanish women authors vocally denying their work's affiliation with the label 'feminist', and Anglo-American critics repeatedly resorting to it, be it as a starting point for their analyses or as the whole point for contention and ultimate validation of the original work. The main site of dispute is precisely the legitimising intention underlying critics' persistent invocation of a feminist value to the work in hand, as if it were a latent image of sorts simply waiting to be developed. To put it in Glenn's terms when commenting on an interview with authors Mercedes Abad, Soledad Puértolas, and Cristina Fernández Cubas (Carmona *et al* 1991):

The conversation is intriguing, because it shows the American questioners returning again and again to the issue of feminism and feminist writing and the Spanish authors growing increasingly annoyed. Implicit, and at times explicit, in their responses is the conviction that critics try to force writing by women into a specific framework or straightjacket. (Glenn 2001: 374-375)

Glenn's words above seem to have hit the crux of the matter. In order to avoid being continually subjected to critical encasement by feminist critics, a great number of Spanish writers (Glenn mentions Mercedes Abad, Cristina Fernández Cubas, Marina

Mayoral or Paloma Díaz-Mas, to name but a few contemporary ones) refuse to be associated with a feminist agenda. However, their endeavours toward this characteristic elusiveness are usually neutralised by critical manoeuvres that more often than not manage to override the authors' call for cautiousness in this regard. Interestingly enough, Glenn's article, which begins by tackling this quandary in sobering tones, eventually exercises this precise critical turn. In the following paragraph, for instance, the potential critical impasse brought about by Carme Riera's explicit positioning as an author unconcerned with the literary feminist cause, is dispatched with expeditious argumentation:

Behind their statements lies the identification of feminist writing with advocacy and the assumption that it lacks literary worth. These writers want their work to be taken seriously, to be valued for its own merit –not for the sex of its author- and to be read by men and women alike. They resist being relegated to the ghetto of literature by and for women. It is within this context that we should evaluate Riera's declaration that she is not a feminist writer. From this side of the Atlantic, however, she indeed looks like one. (Glenn 2001: 375)

This critical posture indicates a somewhat patronising, as in pre-patterned, approach to the object of study. Moreover, the critic visibly resorts to somewhat sardonic tones in order to round the matter off. The result is a distancing effect, necessary for her to proceed with the argument by minimising the import of the author's own insights which, if fully incorporated, would certainly preclude such a study. Concomitantly, a division is delineated between Spanish women writers' seemingly unconscious, almost compulsive rejection of the feminist tag for socio-cultural reasons that fall beyond their grasp, and American critics' better informed, removed critical position, which allows them to appreciate the whole picture and thus produce more comprehensive figurations. A relationship of inequality visibly informs this interaction and precludes the possibility of a more mutually validating rapport. Very recent studies, such as those focusing on relatively novel women writers, still evidence this type of *modus operandi*. In essence, many articles penned by American feminist Hispanists can be said to respond to a certain obsession with the label 'feminist', which could be understood as an inversion of the same compulsive refutation practised by many Spanish women authors. Put differently, just as numerous Spanish writers will recurrently distance themselves and their work from overtly feminist

agendas in what is perceived as an instinctual and uninformed reflex that exasperates American critics, one could argue the latter likewise succumb to the label's allure in similarly mechanical ways. This phenomenon will be explicated through the metacritical methodology that the thesis adopts. It should go without saying that this persistent critical trend galls Spanish women writers to a comparable measure and that this specific section of American Hispanism is therefore encased today in a vicious circle.

Janet Pérez's recent article 'Tradition, Renovation, Innovation: The Novels of Belén Gopegui' (2003) can be seen as an instance of the propensity towards unqualified applications of the label 'feminist' mentioned above. By dealing with a relatively new Spanish woman writer (Gopegui published her first novel *La escala de los mapas* in 1993), Pérez's article fulfils an introductory function and offers a broad-brush overview of the author's first three novels. It should be emphasised that, by so doing, Pérez is not only paving the way for further studies on this author but pre-establishing possible critical approaches to her. Her significant steering towards feminist lines of enquiry is likely to yield analogous future readings of Gopegui, a possibility that is also reinforced by the critical authority that Janet Pérez holds in feminist Hispanism. A token of this critic's eminence in the field is the publication *Estudios en honor a Janet Pérez: El sujeto femenino en escritoras hispánicas* (1998), where the author is described as "una de las personas más influyentes en el estudio de la literatura española del siglo XX" (Myers 1998: i), or Ignacio Soldevila-Durante's 'Sobre la escritura femenina y su reivindicación en el conjunto de la historia de la literatura contemporánea (A propósito de un reciente libro de Janet Pérez)' (1990), where the author's encomiastic commentary about Pérez serves as the springboard for subsequent critical considerations.

Let us examine the ways in which Janet Pérez's compulsive feminist appraisal of Gopegui's early novels is articulated. After a panoramic foray into the possible creative patterns observable in late 20<sup>th</sup>-Century, women-authored fiction in Spain, the critic locates the author in hand by denying the plausibility of a feminist reading of her novelistic production: "Any mention to Gopegui in relation to other women novelists should make clear that she cannot in good conscience be classed as

feminist” (Pérez 2003: 116). Consequent upon this remark, the reader expects a study that would explore theoretical bases other than the feminist. However, the critic repeatedly falls back into this mode of analysis, thus generating a study that seems incongruous in critical terms. When addressing style in Gopegui’s second novel *Tocarnos la cara* (1995), for instance, she uses the adjective “feminine” without qualification by stating that language in this novel is invigorated with “startlingly fresh, original metaphors and similes, rhetorical figures both personal and unmistakably feminine, as well as representative of her particular sub-culture” (Pérez 2003: 117). The semantic load of a descriptor such as “unmistakably feminine” is, in this context, disquietingly elusive, inasmuch as the question still arises as to the intended significance of the adjective “feminine” when applied to an author who has been previously presented as unequivocally unconcerned with feminist agendas. One’s impression that the adjective functions here as a phraseological fixture intended to legitimise scholarly attention on this author from a feminist stance is the stronger when we turn to the article’s thematic analysis. Again, attention is directed towards the ways in which female characters in Gopegui’s novels may or may not be ratifiable from the feminist viewpoint. For example, the female narrator of *Tocarnos la cara* is brought under this type of scrutiny:

Although Sandra originally appears as a somewhat autonomous female, with a degree of independence (she is self-supporting), she lacks a feminist consciousness, and her observations of the director’s womanizing and exploitative relationships do not prevent her succumbing to his seductive attractions. A feminist reading of this novel would necessarily point out Sandra’s regression from quasi-subject status in the beginning to consenting object at the end, her role as accomplice in her own exploitation as she renounces her agency in exchange for an uncertain relationship whose continuation is unlikely. (Pérez 2003: 122-123)

I believe the remarks above are wrongheaded as an interpretation of Sandra in *Tocarnos la Cara*, for the reason that they rely on the questionable assumption that Sara is necessarily (or should be) looking for a ‘certain’ relationship whose continuation is ‘likely’. However, to dwell on the applicability of this conjecture to the fictional plot in hand is beside the main point. Rather, I would like to address the pertinence of such qualifications, again, in the light of the critic’s introductory comment of Gopegui’s work. As it stands, a feminist evaluation of the narrator seems inapplicable in this context and reveals a great deal more about the critic articulating

it (or about the critical milieu in which it is formulated) than about the literary work itself. It could be suggested that there is an urge in this study to articulate a feminist reading almost coercively, even when this stands, by the critic's own admission, in contradiction with the overall significance of Gopegui's production. The conclusions reached partly confirm this hypothesis, as Pérez persists in searching for possible critical paths to validate the literary work in feminist, or at most, post-feminist, terms:

Somewhat curiously, despite the predominance of ideological themes in many of their conversations, feminism never figures as an issue; some women in this novel – successful professionals– bear little resemblance either to the traditional feminine gender model imposed by the Franco regime or more consciously feminist models of the 1980s, again suggesting the possible appropriateness of a “post-feminist” classification for Gopegui. (Pérez 2003: 124)

This quasi-atavistic drive towards pressing for a feminist reading does not only operate at the cost of the original work's importance as ‘*literatura comprometida*’ along other fronts, elsewhere attested by critics such as Eva Legido-Quigley, who see in Gopegui's novels a bracing backlash against typically postmodernist forms of social cynicism and disillusionment (Legido-Quigley 2001). It is also implemented to the detriment of the article's line of argumentation, as the reader is left wondering to what extent the insertion of captious commentary about the novels' feminist value is at all relevant when those novels have been classified as disassociated from feminism as a literary cause. This critic's tendency to crowbar a feminist appraisal into her article is but one recent instance of a pervasive pattern across gender-oriented American Hispanism, a pattern that may appropriately remind us of psychologist Abraham Maslow's famous aphorism: “If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to treat every problem as a nail”.

What this brief overview of various pertinent articles aims to indicate is that there is an interconnected sense of frustration permeating a section of Anglo-American feminist Hispanism, which is only just beginning to be addressed. Schematically, I believe this disappointment, which hinders, as we have seen, a more positive and dynamic dialogue between Spanish women writers and Anglo-American academics, finds its genesis in the Anglo-American critical reaction to the so-called boom of women authors in Spain in the late seventies and eighties. I believe this critical

reaction was, in fact, an over-reaction, indeed an academic ‘boom’ of duration and dimensions comparable to the creative one, and characterised mainly by two properties.

First, it was a rapidly unfolding process responding to a highly localised impetus, namely that of articulating a steadfast response to the burgeoning of works suddenly up for grabs in peninsular letters. Indeed, if Monserrat Lunati speaks of a “mushrooming of names in the 1980s and 1990s” (Lunati 1997: 4) when referring to the emergence to prominence of new women authors, one could likewise apply the expression to the rippling of Anglo-American publications (monographic periodical issues, articles, and book-length volumes) that was to accompany this phenomenon. The year 1987 is a good example of this fast and furious state of critical activity around peninsular women writers, as it saw the appearance of both the monographic issue of *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* and the journal *Catalan Review*’s homage to Mercè Rodoreda. Both publications are in many senses exemplary indices of the main lines of argument that were to characterise the critical debate around women writers in Hispanic letters. Among these, the dissension about the validity of the label ‘feminist’ when applied to authors that openly repudiate it featured prominently and, as we shall see, this debate continues to lie at the epicentre of concern.

A second distinct feature of the Anglo-American critical coverage of the Spanish boom in women-authored narratives, and possibly of any critical coverage of a fast-developing process, is that in aiming to illuminate as large a number as possible of emerging names and works, it created its own penumbral areas. To put it differently, as scholarly activity developed apace, a process of selection unfolded in parallel which gave preference to a privileged few and showed a certain remissness about others. The rationale behind these options is a difficult one to advance and will come into full view in the course of the thesis. However, a few words of preliminary explanation are needed. Anglo-American critical commitment to Spanish women authors developed, not fortuitously, at a time when powerful theoretical constructs about the notion and plausibility of a feminine writing style were fully in vogue. If the sixties and seventies saw an unprecedented production of mainly notional writing

around the twentieth-century ‘woman question’, best epitomised by the seminal works of Mary Daly or Adrienne Rich in the U.S., centred around women’s social presence, and those of Hélène Cixous or Luce Irigaray in France, who were more concerned with women’s textual presence, the eighties (and to a lesser degree the nineties) witnessed a critical bustle particularly preoccupied with the discovery of literary practitioners of these abstractions. Among these theoretical notions, the stylistic concept of *écriture féminine* significantly monopolised scholarly attention and yielded an enormous volume of work. Much of what was written about Spanish women authors during the eighties revolved round this issue and, specifically, about the degree to which certain writers could be said to incorporate in their works the maxims of a gender-marked style as theorised by French feminist philosophers. Unsurprisingly, those authors whose literary project did not marry well, or was seemingly unconcerned with the theoretical apparatus implemented, received significantly scantier attention. A few names can be suggested in order to demonstrate this point. Of those authors who started publishing during the Transition years, a most favourable and fertile period for women-authored literature in Spain, the names of Cristina Fernández Cubas or Soledad Puértolas have only dimly resonated within Anglo-American critical circles. Even though they have both been the object of a number of articles and one book-length volume each (Marguerite DiNonno-Intemann’s *El tema de la soledad en la narrativa de Soledad Puértolas* and Jessica Folkart’s *Angles of Otherness in Post-Franco Spain: The Fiction of Cristina Fernández Cubas*), critical interest in them has been considerably more meagre than that in the names and works of, for example, Esther Tusquets or Rosa Montero. A possible explicandum for this imbalance is, as hinted above, that the latter’s works are seemingly more concerned with modes of stylistic experimentation, or contain thematic material that could be probed with the theoretical tools in vogue.

With this perception in mind, it could be argued that the net beneficiaries in Hispanic letters of these new critical trends were Esther Tusquets, Rosa Montero, and Mercè Rodoreda. Critical work on them was initiated in the early eighties as a result of the favourable theoretical framework available and continues to be fostered in the present day. Apart from the numerous articles devoted to her work, with the last one



being published as recently as 2004 (Marr 2004), the work of Esther Tusquets has been the subject of four book-length volumes (Molinaro 1991; Vázquez 1991; Ichiishi 1994; Dolgin-Casado 2002). Rosa Montero has likewise been a fixture in Anglo-American Hispanist periodicals, with the last article I could locate on her work being published in 2003 (Briones-Barco 2003), and there are also four books devoted to her novelistic production (Amell 1994; Davies 1994; Knights 1999; Harges 2000). Setting aside the consistent critical attention she has attracted within European scholarship (especially in France and Italy), Mercè Rodoreda has also featured prominently in American publications. While a number of recent articles attest to the zeal of Rodoredian scholarship in American institutions (Tobin-Stanley 2003; Arkinstall 2004b), it is with the publication of two recent monographs that Anglo-American scholarship has been significantly invigorated (Everly 2003; Arkinstall 2004a). As a meaningful indicator of the degree to which all three authors began to attract critics' attention more or less simultaneously since the eighties, it is worth noting that several articles on their work were included in the 1987 monographic issue of *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* (Gascón Vera; Levine; Nichols; Ordóñez; Servodidio; Zatlin).

Also a gauge for these three authors' exceptional stature within Anglo-American critical circles is the fact that several of their novels are today available in English translation. Although more comprehensive accounts about the genealogy and significance of each translated text will be provided in the pertinent chapters, a brief overview is now in order. Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant* (1962) was first to appear in English as *The Pigeon Girl* (translated by Eda O'Shiel) in 1967 and later reintroduced by David Rosenthal's *The Time of the Doves* in 1981 in what is today considered the prevailing translation. Rosenthal was also to be the translator of *La meva Cristina i altres contes* and *El carrer de les Camèlies* into English, as *My Christina and Other Stories* (1984) and *Camellia Street* (1993) respectively. By contrast, the works of Esther Tusquets and Rosa Montero have been translated by a wide range of names. In the case of the Barcelona-born author, her novels have been translated by both Tusquetsian experts working within academic institutions, as is the case of Margaret E. W. Jones and her prize-winning *The Same Sea as Every Summer*

(1990) and Barbara F. Ichiishi's *Never to Return* (1999), and by qualified translators as a one-off job, probably by commission, arguably the case of Bruce Penman's *Love is a Solitary Game* (1985) and Susan E. Clark's *Stranded* (1991). The same seems to apply to the translations of Montero's *Crónica del desamor* into English as *Absent Love: A Chronicle* (1991), and of *La función Delta* as *The Delta Function* (1991), themselves the work of two pairs of translators, namely Cristina de la Torre (also an academic, though not, to the best of my knowledge, a Rosa Montero specialist) and Diana Glad in the first case, and Kari Easton and Yolanda Molina Gavilán in the second. In comparison with the more meagre and, at any rate, more recent attention paid to other peninsular women writers such as Carme Riera or Ana María Moix in English translation, the translations of Rodoreda, Tusquets and Montero into English stand out as a panoply of complex landmarks for the study of these authors' reception by an English-speaking audience, which has not to date been explored.

The reasons why these three authors have been selected for the present thesis have therefore less to do with actual interconnections between them and their works than with the fact that they have been the object of a concerted project of diffusion articulated by Anglo-American academic institutions. It is in this sense that critical dialogue and translations have commingled in the transmission of a given cultural capital into the moulds of a receiving episteme, which has by dint of that movement, made them homogeneously meaningful. The receiving outlook was one historically conducive to feminist research and welcomed new and bracing critical explorations of uncharted ground. Peninsular women-authored literature was one such ground and the potential discovery of literary work penned by virtually unknown authors of what had until then remained mainly theoretical abstractions was the underlying motor. Needless to say, the belief that a feminist thrust informed the original works in hand (either overtly or in more ambivalent ways) was the common denominator defining the myriad publications around the matter.

Despite the fact that the Anglo-American criticism has devoted comparable efforts to the dissemination of the figures and works of Esther Tusquets, Mercè Rodoreda, and Rosa Montero, and that the thesis consequently unites them under an overarching

metacritical methodology, these authors' literary trajectories are in fact significantly disparate. In the first instance, chronology separates Mercè Rodoreda from the other two. Having lived through the most life-scarring vicissitudes of the twentieth century (the end of the Spanish Second Republic, the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship, and the Second World War), she died in 1983, when the transition to democracy in Spain had just begun to stabilise. The novels and short stories that would gain her an almost iconic worth in Catalan letters had all been completed before the so-called boom of women-writers in the post-Franco years, a literary phenomenon of which both Tusquets and Montero are considered to be the main instigators. Of crucial importance also in this introductory differentiation is that Rodoreda wrote consistently in Catalan. This fact makes her acquired international visibility all the more meaningful, although, as will become apparent, it has been occasionally too easy for critics to overlook this defining feature of her opus and treat her as an asset of Spanish letters.

The names of Esther Tusquets and Rosa Montero have frequently featured together under the heading of post-Franco, women-authored literature in Spain, especially in those studies aiming at reviewing the boom (Ordóñez 1987; Zatlin 1987; Davies 1991; Jones 1992). In a nutshell, a series of "gender-based commonalities" (Perriam *et al.* 2000: 214) have been articulated between them, with particular emphasis on the ways in which these authors have incorporated French feminist theoretical maxims and cultivated themes and forms that could be said to counteract patriarchal discourses. Despite the affinities invoked in the name of critical bracketing, and the fact that they have at certain points in their careers cultivated similar genres (they have both, for example, written children's literature and have recently published comparable works of fictionalised autobiography, namely *Correspondencia privada* and *La loca de la casa*), the works of Tusquets and Montero visibly conform to divergent literary agendas. Born a child of the Barcelonian middle-class in 1936, Esther Tusquets was the director of the Lumen publishing house until she retired in 2000. Her novelistic production has shown a consistency of themes and forms which Rosa Montero's production has consciently eluded. While Tusquets's literary mainstays have been the exploration within a realist frame of a self-engrossed, upper-

class, female persona and potential paths of personal liberation (almost always frustrated in the end), the novels of Rosa Montero have probed into a variety of character creations, ranging across the gender, class, and age parameters, while practising several literary genres including fantasy. Although the author is notorious for her adamant rejection of what she terms “*novelas utilitarias*” (Montero in Escudero 2000: 215), her early narratives and her sustained journalistic work have given rise to critical figurations that emphasise her social and political commitment, a personal project which Javier Escudero has accurately defined as “*un proyecto político y social de izquierdas*” (Escudero 2000: 211). This central difference between both authors can be located in what emerges as a firm pattern in their choice of fictional characters: while Tusquets shows a propensity for educated women married to wealthy, successful male characters whose prolonged absences leave them time and space to explore the boundaries of their sexuality and the full implications of their boredom, Montero’s characters tend to be marginal subjects, occasionally verging on the grotesque and the deformed, who more often than not lead an existence marked by cruelty, ostracism, and trauma.

Beyond the important divergences outlined above, the thesis brings all three authors together under a metacritical gaze in the belief that the received literature on them coming from Anglo-American academia exhibits a series of shared patterns. Firstly, they have all been held under review for over two decades now, and in the main, this critical enterprise has progressed along the vectors of feminist enquiry. Secondly, the persistence of this criterion marking Anglo-American scholarship on these authors has given rise to what has recently turned into a source of polemics, namely the extent to which the recurring gynocentric readings extracted were pertinent at all in the light of these authors’ later narratives. To put it differently, various critical voices have begun to wonder whether feminist critical activity around these authors in the eighties was not in fact a hasty one, with the result that the original works were more often than not coaxed into meaning by force of analytical tools that have recently proved ill-fitting. This apparent deadlock has manifested itself in different ways within each author’s critical reception.

In the case of Mercè Rodoreda, the conflict has come into relief as a relational argument between Catalan and American critical debates on the author. The controversy was already a lively one in 1987, when the monographic issue of *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda*, was published. Two main articles were included here, namely those by Jaume Martí-Olivella and Joan Ramon Resina (both Catalan scholars working in American institutions), who seconded diametrically opposing stances regarding the gender-centred literature on Rodoreda. Whilst Martí-Olivella announces in his preface that the feminist line of enquiry will come to reinvigorate critical dialogue on the author and salvage her opus from becoming rigidified under a “fixed canonical interpretation” (Martí-Olivella 1987: 11), Resina vehemently impugns the validity of such a course of action, on the grounds that it brings forth a “deterritorialization of the text” (Resina 1987: 227), that is a muffling of Rodoreda’s novels’ powerful resonance within the Catalan geopolitical enclave, which feminist appraisals strategically cast aside, he asserts, “for the benefit of a critical thesis” (Resina 1987: 227). This two-pronged critical front has continued to be addressed by Rodoredian critics, frequently with a view to introducing further nuances on the debate, which more often than not serve to amplify the division. Elizabeth Scarlett dwells on Resina’s argument and supports the desirability of an exercise of “reterritorialization” (Scarlett 1994b: 102) by dint of a study that foregrounds a geography of the body in Rodoreda’s novels. Elizabeth Rhodes likewise notes that within Rodoredian scholarship “among the most thorny problems currently at hand is that of feminism and the equally prickly question of gender” (Rhodes 1994: 162). María Isidra Mencos recapitulates the most salient divergences between Catalan and Anglo-American critical idioms on Rodoreda and concludes that the question of gender has been the nucleus of dispute, and goes on to say that “it does not seem productive to transform the field of Rodoreda criticism into a battlefield of valid or invalid perspectives, for example, between those that defend or attack the feminist viewpoint” (Mencos 1999: 246-247). Despite her call for a gradual overcoming of this stalemating tug-of-war, I believe the conflict over the legitimacy of feminist readings of Rodoreda continues to underlie many a publication coming from both the Catalan and the Anglo-American milieu. For this reason, I take

up Mencos's argument and try to articulate a metacritical reading of both strands of Rodoredian scholarship, with a view to shedding light on how both the practice and the negation of a feminist approach to Rodoreda has given rise to two opposing lines of argument which, in turn, feed upon a self-generated set of metaphors. As will transpire from this reading, whilst Catalan scholarship is bent on fostering a universalising image of the author as an iconic "*figura polièdrica*" of Catalan letters (Mohino i Balet 2002: 11), Anglo-American studies have made the author internationally meaningful through a continuous focus on her works' feminist valence. This process of dissemination was significantly complemented by the translational project. Often mentioned as an empowering sign of the author's international relevance by both critical fronts, the translations into English of Rodoreda's novels seem, however, to take sides with the gender-centred project. As we shall see, an analysis of the selection underlying the translations available (focused to date on Rodoreda's first-person female narratives) and of the paratext supporting the American editions (among which a foreword by feminist Chicana author Sandra Cisneros stands out) shows that Anglo-American critical figurations and translations stand together as a monolithically consistent point of reference. A closer textual analysis of the translated texts, however, suggests the opposite. More precisely, some of the translational strategies implemented by David Rosenthal in his texts significantly put at risk an adequate transposition of the cadences and modulations of the seemingly guileless, female narrators' speech, as has been described in the secondary literature. Such a departure from the initial, more perfunctory inference as to the gender-oriented bias behind the translational project reveals a meaningful hiatus in the overall path of reception that has not been, to the best of my knowledge, critically addressed. Chapters 1 and 2, although self-contained in their argumentation, are therefore designed to enter into dialogue in this regard, and to show that an analysis of translations as critical texts serves to complicate the seldom one-way nature of cultural dissemination.

In the case of Esther Tusquets, the current discontent with the unequivocally feminist interpretations initially formulated about her novels has found a vociferous outlet in a series of publications. In the eighties, a great many critics announced the

exceptional value of Tusquets's works from a gynocentric stance, centring specifically on their eye-catching stylistic façade and on the lesbian theme introduced. Under these two parameters, Tusquets's novels were often analysed in the light of French feminist theory, to the extent that she rapidly became the peninsular priestess of *écriture féminine*. More recently, however, an argument has arisen against such figurations. Predictably, this critical backlash has charged against the same pillars initially supporting pro-feminist readings. From the point of view of style, a recent publication by M. J. Marr has questioned the connections between Tusquets's writing mode in *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978) and Cixous's *écriture féminine* and formulated a divergent stylistic appraisal of the former. In short, Marr argues that the seemingly meandering style in the novel is in fact cyclically checked by a return to the same spatial landmarks (usually physical objects), a technique which renders discourse an ultimately successful fumbling for "space and mapping" (Marr 2004: 230). This thesis significantly overthrows former appraisals of Tusquetsian style as free verbal flow. As regards lesbianism in Tusquets's novels, the author's well-known tendency to abort every possible happy ending for the women lovers has been a cause for mounting suspicion among critics. The reception of her last work of fiction to date, *Con la miel en los labios* (1997), described by Mercedes Rodríguez de Mazquiarán as an "obra fría y distante que dejó insatisfechos a muchos de sus lectores y críticos" (Rodríguez de Mazquiarán 2003: 454), was a culmination of this sense of disappointment, as numerous critics have expressed misgivings about the feminist validity of an oeuvre that invariable condemns lesbian love to ultimate invisibility (Ortiz Ceberio 2001; Smith 2002). All in all, the main snag with Tusquetsian Anglo-American scholarship as has developed in the last two decades, seems to be that a set of expectations springing from specifically Anglo-American notions of feminist activism has deformed critical debates on the author and led critics to the current, somewhat sour, state of frustration. My argument is based on the conviction that between the traditions of gender oppression characterising many past and present regimes (including, of course, the Spanish dictatorship), and the pragmatic activism aimed at the immediate improvement of women's socio-political status operating in Western countries today,

there lies an immensely nuanced spectrum of politically-minded action whose effects on women may not be so tangible. Thus, gestures of a mainly descriptive or expository nature are also articulated whose value for future pragmatic action is also inestimable. I believe Tusquets's 'problematical feminism' hides precisely underneath a façade of seemingly repressed images and forms, which some critics have deemed reactionary or conservative, but which in fact give the right measure of the state of entrapment from which Tusquets's female characters (and tenably Tusquets herself) verbalise their experience. The impulse behind Chapter 3 is to try to locate such rhetoric of entrapment mainly through stylistic enquiry, but without abandoning a metacritical methodology. In broad terms, I argue that critics' persistent focus on the interconnections between Tusquets's novels and French feminist stylistic tenets has led them to the present state of dissatisfaction and has concomitantly precluded a more attentive apprehension of the denouncement in disguise that her novels perpetrate. Such denouncement targets women's enclosure within an experiential range limited to prescribed notions of romanticism, extracted in the main from literature, which ultimately thwarts their attempts at liberation, particularly in the form of lesbian love. It is essential to note at this point that this pattern emerges almost invariably in all of Tusquets's novels and that, as I will try to demonstrate, style functions in all of them as a formal incarnation of that very enclosure. This statement leads us to the thrust of Chapter 4, focused on the translations into English of Tusquets's novels. In view of the considerable sense of continuity visible across Tusquets's literary trajectory and of the considerable scholarly attention this feature has attracted, I propose an analysis of the four extant translations that focuses on how that sense of monotonic stylistic contour is preserved or discontinued. I will argue that whilst the translations produced mainly within an academic context spring from an attentive awareness of Tusquets's typical forms, the one by Bruce Penman, primarily a commercial product, dispossesses the text of its functionally loaded style. Such a line of argumentation will lead us to a noteworthy crux, namely that the translations produced by academic translators who upheld a connection between Tusquetsian textuality and contemporary formulations of a possible writing in the feminine (ostensibly Margaret E. W. Jones and Barbara F.



Ichishi), are the ones that offer a better-wrought, more heedful rendering of the original novels. In other words, critics' persistent championing of Tusquets's novels as practical manifestations of the concept of *écriture féminine* lead them to produce translations that are highly mindful of style, which is after all, yet for reasons that I deem other than its potential link with gynocentric figurations, an essential presence in Tusquets's novels. Translated texts have therefore gained from such a critical connection in a way that scholarly debate has not. Assertions in this mould will force us to readdress the consequences of critics' persistent focus on the feminist value of Tusquets's opus for its Anglo-American diffusion.

Finally, the works and critical reception of Rosa Montero are examined. In this domain, patterns akin to those present in the literature about Mercè Rodoreda and Esther Tusquets also emerge. Firstly, the work of Rosa Montero was also subjected to parallelisms with French formulations of a writing in the feminine; analyses in this light of her early novels have featured side by side with those on Tusquets, particularly in those critical readings whose aim was to prove the existence of peninsular literary paragons of French *écriture féminine* (Gascón Vera 1992). Likewise, criticism on Montero has had to confront the author's progressive disengagement from her early women-oriented narratives, a contingency that has given rise, as in Rodoredian scholarship, to critics' lack of interest in her more recent production. Beyond these analogies, scholarship on Rosa Montero has yielded a curious paradox, namely that it has persistently revolved around those works whose value as literary artefacts has been most vociferously contested by both critics and the author. Her first and second novels, *Crónica del desamor* (1979) and *La función Delta* (1981) have been vocally disclaimed by Montero herself and described by numerous critics and reviewers as works of immaturity. Yet, they have continued to be studied into the late nineties and they are the only ones that have been made available in English translation. In Chapter 5, I argue that critical dialogue on these novels has, however, proceeded according to an early impulse towards labelling them as pieces of feminine writing and a later questioning of their artistic value, the while relying on a series of critical premises that have become almost platitudinous in Montero scholarship and are rarely directly explored. I will try to demonstrate that it

is in these commonplaces of Monterian criticism (namely that her early works resonate with journalistic parlance, that they integrate humour and irony and that they effected a powerful sense of reader identification, among a primarily female readership, through the textual articulation of an urban woman's routine during a critical historical point) that the kernel of their feminist worth is located. Critics' failure to give these prominent textual aspects their due significance will be carried over into Chapter 6, devoted to translational analysis. As will emerge from a selective juxtaposition of originals and translated texts, *Absent Love: A Chronicle* and *The Delta Function*, both published in 1991 at a time of what the author has described as "ese fervor de publicación "feminista", de libros supuestamente feministas" (Montero 2004, personal communication), show a lack of engagement with precisely those textual and thematic traits that conveyed gender-minded poignancy in the originals. Contrary to what was the case in Tusquets's translations (save Penman's text), critical misconstructions did not allow for a margin of error from which satisfactory translations could still be generated (a paradox exemplified, as we shall see, in Ichiishi's critical argument, which I contest, and yet more than apposite translation of Tusquets's *Para no volver*). In Montero's case, scholarly neglect of textual duplicities in the broadest sense has been carried over into the translations, where a similar lack of stylistic perceptiveness is disclosed. More aggravatingly, the translations show a palpable stifling of the originals' subversive recreation of female sexuality and specifically gendered vision, a baffling strategy when taking into account the feminist editorial milieu in which they appeared. Once again, the conjunction of metacritical and translational analyses shows that the migration of cultural capital is a phenomenon fraught with contradictions and undersides, at times shaped by forces inimical to the very motivation (feminist enquiry, in this case) that originally instigated it.

Two further points need to be made before I turn to the first chapter. In the first instance, the fact that I suggest a reassessment of the works of Mercè Rodoreda, Esther Tusquets, and Rosa Montero in the light of the vast literature produced around them does not mean that I am trying to unearth the "single secret message" (Donaldson 1988: 75) encoded in the originals; nor that I imply that the myriad

readings extracted from these works have gone mainly adrift. It is the bulk of such readings that I intend to examine by consulting as wide a critical corpus as has been within my power, with a view to exposing and explicating the main patterns, tendencies, and tensions that characterise it.

Secondly, I believe this metacritical *modus operandi*, a practice gradually spreading across Anglo-American Hispanism, becomes all the more valuable in that it integrates translational analysis. Such a methodology relies upon the conviction that an examination of the extant translated texts constitutes a decisive litmus test for the claims and stakes recurrently adduced in the criticism. Put differently, exploring the translations in the light of the critical figurations helps shed further light on the complex grid of expectations, selections and restraints upon which cultural currents necessarily rely. This analytical procedure goes beyond recent approaches to the study of translations as another valid form of literary criticism. Such belief is deftly encapsulated in Scottish poet Christopher Whyte's assertion that "There is no better form of criticism than translation" (Whyte 2002: 69) and is the central premise of studies such as Marilyn Gaddis Rose's *Translation and Literary Criticism: Translation as Analysis* (1997). To put it in her own words:

Translation and literary criticism, our main terms here, have always been historically interdependent. But over the past quarter century, proponents of both literary criticism . . . and post-Heideggerian philosophy, when classified together as postmodernists, have found in translation a key to literary theory. Their use of translation, although it stops short of the use to be made of it in the following pages, can be a cue and a justification (if such is needed) for using translation as a critical method both for analyzing literature and teaching it, not to mention translating it. Translation brings us *into* a literary work, in the usual sense of immersion and identification. (Rose 1997: 2, emphasis in the original)

Beyond her exploration of the study of translations as a most convenient (and unexploited) way of reading literature, I propose an approach to translations as appropriate tools in the study of criticism. In other words, the analysis of translations will further illuminate the routes of reception charted by critical texts, proving (or disproving) the extent to which critical figurations have crystallised or dissolved, been integrated or shunned by translators in their capacity as non-neutral interpreters of cultural goods. It is with such a premise in perspective that the thesis is aimed to

develop. In this sense, my project is equally committed to the discipline of Translation Studies as it is to Hispanism.

## **Chapter 1: Mercè Rodoreda Local and International: Parallels, Intersections, and Divergences across Rodoredian Scholarship**

The Anglo-American critical reception and translations of Mercè Rodoreda have been informed by a specific economics of transmission. As I will try to demonstrate in the present and the next chapter, an image of the Catalan author has been promoted mainly in Anglo-American periodicals and monographs that does justice only to one possible value in the variegated interpretative potential of her artistic production: the feminist thrust arguably operating across her work. This exercise of one-sided refraction develops in synchronisation with the translational output, which also responds, as we will see in the next chapter, to a selective inclination towards those of her novels that most manageably lend themselves to feminist readings. Although this seemingly airtight project of diffusion has to be praised for its commitment to the spreading of the Catalan author's work in the Anglophone context, the extent to which its focus on the feminist valences of the original works is salutary or ultimately reductionist needs to be addressed. I will therefore begin by undertaking a metacritical analysis of Rodoredian local and Anglo-American scholarship by centring on a debate which, I hope, will foster new insights into this situation.

First, I will be addressing the markedly divergent cross-currents of enquiry between Anglo-American critical discourse and Catalan scholarship on Mercè Rodoreda. The critical breaches between these two strands of analysis will be explored in two interrelated areas (here, two consecutive subsections, 1.1.1 and 1.1.2, to be read in contraposition). On the one hand, I will be looking at how the image of a feminist Mercè Rodoreda has been articulated by Anglo-American academia and at the inevitable tensions, recurring motifs and contrived metaphors that intersperse this at times obdurate discourse. I will try to show that symptoms of argumental precipitation or circumlocutory evasion (especially, as we shall see, when it comes to

addressing Rodoreda's own attitude towards feminism) emerge in a large number of publications. Tensions such as these have intensified in a series of recent studies (Pérez 1993; Pérez and Ihrle 2002), and have been unswervingly addressed and attenuated in others (Arkinstall 2004). Then, I will move on to examine this tendency in the light of what can be put forward as the 'universalising' project of diffusion undertaken by Catalan Rodoredian scholarship, articulated mainly through a coverage of, not only those novels which have been manifestly ignored by Anglo-American academia, namely *Quanta, quanta guerra...* (1980) and *La mort i la primavera* (1986), but also of the other artistic genres with which the artist engaged in her lifetime. A paradox is thus engendered between the local aspirations for a dissemination of the author and her work through an emphasis on its all-embracing scope and boundless creative status, and the Anglo-American minimisation of its import through the insistent focus on its feminist slant, an insistence which can perhaps be interpreted, as we shall see, as the most effective way of initiating and securing an international dialogue on the author.

In the second section, I will move on to examine the scant critical attention paid by Anglo-American scholarship to her later novels *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera* and the possible motives behind this traceable neglect (a neglect counteracted, again, by Catalan critical publications). My main aim in this part will be also twofold: first, I will argue that the continuing Anglo-American will to exhaust the women-oriented façade of Rodoreda's opus has impeded more solid analyses of these novels, which elude overtly feminist interpretations. Second, I will put forward a reading of these two novels not as manifestations of a programmatic breakage within Rodoreda's literary trajectory, but as the consummate creations that they are within an understanding of Rodoreda's literary project as the articulation of, what I will term, 'the voice of the outcast'. The overarching link between novels such as *La plaça del Diamant* and *El carrer de les Camèlies* on the one hand, and *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera* on the other, will be explained, as in the rest of the chapters in this thesis, by means of stylistic enquiry.

An additional comment needs to be made before I turn to the core analysis in this chapter. The nature of the distinction hereafter articulated between Catalan and

Anglo-American Rodoredian scholarship is not to be understood in terms of the individual critics' nationalities, but in terms of the provenance of the publishing medium where the studies consulted appeared. Thus, a division emerged between the critical patterns utilised and reiterated in Catalunya-based publications (both book-length volumes or articles usually written in Catalan by Catalan commentators) and those recurrent in U.S.-based, and to a much lesser degree U.K.-based, publications (often written in English by Anglo-American scholars, but also in Catalan and Spanish by non-native critics working in American or British institutions). This differentiation, I hasten to add, is by no means exhaustive, although the critical apparatus consulted is ample enough to make it convincing. It is, moreover, not simply condemnatory. My main aim is to try to evince the main divergences between them with a view to elucidating the ways in which two parallel constructs about the figure and work of Mercè Rodoreda have developed on both sides of the Atlantic. The qualifier 'parallel' is to be understood here, not connotatively, as in 'analogous', but rather geometrically, as in 'never-meeting'. My approach to *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera*, novels more frequently studied by Catalan scholarship, as works attuned to the stylistic project customarily highlighted in the early women-centred narratives by Anglo-American academia, may function as a bridging device to reduce the abyss between the two critical circles. It is to an elucidation of the current gulf between them that I will first turn.

### **1.1 The Persistent Schism between Catalan and Anglo-American Scholarship on Mercè Rodoreda**

If we leave aside the several brief reviews that Rodoreda's pre-War novels elicited soon after their publication (Ballester 1934; Tasis 1934; Oliver 1936; Trabal 1938), Catalan Rodoredian scholarship can be said to originate in the late sixties and early seventies. It was set in motion and promoted by a group of literary analysts and critical authorities such as Joaquim Molas (1967, 1969) and Joan Triadú (1973), or the writers Baltasar Porcel (1966) and Maria Aurelia Campmany (1968). The first monograph on the author would be written by Carme Arnau (1979), following her prologue to the 1976 compilation of Rodoreda's *Obres completes*, which already

gave a foretaste of the arguments developed in the 1979 volume. Catalan scholarship on Mercè Rodoreda has since then unrelentingly endeavoured to shed light on each and every artistic facet cultivated by the author, as well as on biographical material. Her narrative production, old and new, continues to be reprinted and investigated, alongside invaluable work on the more meagrely studied regions of her artistic output. The inquiring thrust of this expansive critical enterprise has been significantly advanced after the author's death in 1983. As the critic and personal friend of the author Anna Maria Saludes i Amat says, "sempre després de la seva desaparició" (Saludes i Amat 1995: 56), a multitude of biography-oriented publications have also come to the fore, mainly in the form of epistolary compilations (Rodoreda 1985; Rodoreda 2002), photograph albums (Nadal 2001), and biographies (Casals i Couturier 1991; Ibarz 1991; Arnau 1992; Aymerich and Pessarrodona 2002), together with significant material, particularly Carles Cortés's book-length volume (2002), on the five pre-War novels, which she was to repudiate upon returning from her exile. Following from Cortés's groundbreaking study (its major breakthrough is the book's objects of study and the fact that the pre-War novels had remained unaddressed for almost seventy years), an initiative on the part of the Fundació Mercè Rodoreda to publish a limited edition of all five works is currently in the offing. The controversy surrounding the publication of works that had been so insistently disowned by the author, a controversy also augmented by the publication of her personal documents, appears magnified in the light of the author's amply documented, almost vital need for discretion (*secretisme*) (Ibarz 1991: 12; Cortés 1995: 127; Mencos 1999: 242; Cortés 2002: 202). The general consensus, however, has been to act in favour of critical elucidation and availability, an agenda substantiated by Llorenç Soldevila's words below, which is a testimony to the current uncurbed vitality of Catalan Rodoredian scholarship:

Malgrat tot creiem que són materials que haurien d'estar més a l'abast dels especialistes ni que sigui contravertint en part la voluntat de l'escriptora. Per aquest motiu creiem encertada la iniciativa de la Fundació Mercè Rodoreda de publicar de manera restringida pròximament totes cinc novel·les perquè els estudiosos d'aquí i de fora tinguin accés a un material que, si bé està a anys llum de la perfecció formal i temàtica de les obres de maduresa, ajudarà a entendre la majoria de les gènesis temàtiques i els camins seguits per l'autora per aconseguir un estil tan personal. (Soldevila i Balart 2002: 10-11)



The year 1980 seems to mark the beginning of the critical diffusion of Mercè Rodoreda's work in English, with the appearance of Mercè Clarasó's article "The Angle of Vision in the Novels of Mercè Rodoreda" (published in the *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*). David Rosenthal's translation of *La plaça del Diamant* (*The Time of the Doves*) soon followed in 1981. Eda O'Shiel's translation of *La plaça del Diamant* (*The Pigeon Girl*) had been published in 1967, but prompted almost no critical echoes. The only academic reference to O'Shiel's translation I have been able to locate is the brief gloss included in Resnick and de Courtivron's annotated bibliography of women's literature in translation, which epigrammatically describes it as a: "good translation, marred by occasional awkward handling of colloquial expressions; helpful notes by translator on place names and customs" (Resnick and Courtivron 1984: 222). As we shall see in the next chapter, the fact that this translation did not undergo any further reprint and that its existence was not even acknowledged by the American translator David Rosenthal in his introduction to *The Time of the Doves* has relegated it to oblivion.

Critical dialogue on the author was sanctioned by Rosenthal's second translation, *My Christina and Other Stories*, published in 1984, and momentarily by the *Catalan Review*'s monographic issue in 1987. The divergent trajectory exercised by Anglo-American scholarship with respect to Catalan criticism was noted as early as this, by Jaume Martí-Olivella in his foreword to the volume. This ramification is explained primarily in terms of "feminist reappraisal" (Martí-Olivella 1987a: 11), a concerted integration of a series of "new perspectives" (Martí-Olivella 1987a: 12) articulated, among others, by renowned Hispanists such as Kathleen McNerney, Frances Wyers, or Geraldine C. Nichols. Most articles included in the 1987 issue serve to corroborate this new critical course, especially those written by Anglo-American critics Emilie Bergman, Mona Fayad, Kathleen M. Glenn, Janet Pérez, Geraldine C. Nichols, and Patricia Lunn. These studies share with each other a feminist agenda and focus almost consistently on the woman-centred novels and short stories (attention falls repeatedly on *La plaça del Diamant* and the emblematic short story "La salamandra" included in *La meva Cristina i altres contes*).

This trend will further fructify in the nineties with two consecutive compilations of articles. Edited by K. McNerney and N. Vosburg in 1994 and by K. McNerney alone in 1999, they are representative of the ample variety of (mainly feminist) stances from which Rodoredian novelistic production has been approached in Anglo-American academia. The articles included in the first book address several aspects touching on gynocentric imagery (for instance, Elizabeth Scarlett's study of Rodoreda's penchant for plants and floral iconography in her novels), the theme of exile (Bou 1994) or the open question of a possible feminist thematic unity (Rhodes 1994). There is a discernible focus on themes, rather than style, and, as with the monographic issue of *Catalan Review* above, the female-centred novels *La plaça del Diamant* and *El carrer de les Camèlies* feature more prominently than the rest.

The second compilation of articles shows both a distinct inclination towards linguistic enquiry and a conscious attempt, acknowledged by the editor in the introduction (McNerney 1999: 17), to target the more neglected aspects and works. Although the overall result offers a balanced assortment of case studies (there are two articles on Rodoreda's posthumous novel *La mort i la primavera* and two others on *Isabel i Maria*, alongside the more accustomed explorations of earlier production, including a foray into her poetry), it can be argued in accordance with Kathryn Cramer that "many of the discussions do centre around common themes such as 'space', 'absence', and the problematic expression of female identities" (2000: 546).

In 2003, Kathryn Everly's book *Catalan Women Writers and Artists: Revisionist Views from a Feminist Space* was published. Everly studied the work of Mercè Rodoreda in dialogical combination with the paintings of Remedios Varo in one chapter, and, more generally, placed it under the specific aegis of a Catalan space (which other critics before Everly have also analysed as an idiosyncratic enclave) conducive to women's artistic production and development (Nichols 1989). Everly offers an innovative re-appraisal of Rodoreda's narrative in that she introduces a series of unfamiliar insights into her genre affiliations and intellectual influences, understood as immersed in the profusion of creative directions and agendas that characterised the European intelligentsia during the interwar period and afterwards, with most of which she grew familiar throughout her exile. Without meaning to

establish an open or unproblematic connection between Rodoreda and surrealism (Everly 2003: 51), the author puts forward an analysis of *La plaça del Diamant* and *El carrer de les Camèlies* as narratives tinged with some of the movement's mainstays, namely, "the surrealist techniques of disorientation, random association and misogyny" (Everly 2003: 52). Further, Varo's paintings and Rodoreda's narratives are brought closer through an ekphrastic approach to the latter (Everly 2003: 74-82). Everly's study offers new valuable readings of Rodoreda's early fictions by associating their most distinctive features with critical frames usually applied to the visual arts. However, its unequivocal feminist approach, together with its focus on the two woman-centred, first-person narratives most frequently studied by Anglo-American academia, places it within the continuum of gynocentric critical directions and early narrative pivots that is still visibly in force.

Curiously enough, a monograph exclusively on the Catalan author coming from Anglo-American criticism has not been made available until very recently. Christine Arkininstall's *Gender, Class, and Nation: Mercè Rodoreda and the Subjects of Modernism* (2004a) is also the first work by an Anglo-American critic to address head-on Rodoreda's pre-War novelistic production together with some of her later works (*El carrer de les Camèlies*, *Mirall trencat*, and *La mort i la primavera*). Her aim can be said to unfold on the same wavelength as that of Everly's, in that she seeks to explore the possible connections between Rodoreda's literary activity and European intellectual campaigns, this time, with a focus on modernist tenets. Her study is innovative for its articulation of the virtually unexplored import of Rodoreda's work as a counterpoint to the rigidified maxims of modernist thought and artistic guidelines. Although a feminist viewpoint underlies her study, she broadens its purview by introducing analyses of, for instance, the resilience and uncommonly multidimensional nature of the so-called realism of *Mirall trencat* or an immensely topical interpretation of *La mort i la primavera* as Rodoreda's own understanding of "extreme nationalisms and the policies of exclusion and oppression of others on which they are constructed" (2004a: 166). Above all, her policy of integration of Catalan scholarship (not only on Rodoreda) into her study, can be read as one of the

first symptoms that the division between Catalan and Anglo-American criticism on Mercè Rodoreda might be starting to dissipate.

The heretofore separated treatment I have used in my brief historical overview of Catalan scholarship and Anglo-American criticism on Rodoreda is to be understood as representative of the very schism between them. A foray into certain publications' bibliographical support will reveal the extent to which both strands of criticism have grown and advanced partly in accordance with the principle of self-generation. This is not to say that they have completely and consistently turned their backs upon each other, in which case the very existence of both critical entities would be seriously damaged, if not jeopardised, but that dialogue between them has been largely characterised by a curious lack of reciprocation. The advances and new insights put forward by critics working in each critical milieu seem to have been acknowledged, recaptured and engaged with mainly by those critics operating in the same working and publishing environs as the one where they first appeared. Let us offer a few examples.

The work of Alicantian critic Carles Cortés has been instrumental in the exploration of both chronological ends of Rodoreda's narrative production. His study of alchemic symbolism in *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera*, on the one hand (1995), and his more recent book on Rodoreda's pre-exile novels (2002) on the other, respond to the locally-articulated objective of filling the voids and cementing the foundations of a multifarious critical work on the author. These studies, however, emerge from an almost total lack of rapprochement with Anglo-American publications: in his first book-length study, there is only one reference to an Anglo-American author, Mary Ellen Bieder, and to two of her articles on Rodoreda, published in 1982 and 1988. In his most recent publication, only three out of ninety-two cited references belong to Anglo-American publications, namely McNerney and Cristina Enríquez's encyclopaedic *Double Minorities of Spain* (1994), McNerney's article "Pens and Needles: Survival Techniques of Mercè Rodoreda and Anna Murià" (1990), and McNerney and Vosburg's 1994 compilation of articles. There is no reference to McNerney's 1999 compilation. Various reasons may explain this lack of interchange, ranging from questions of availability in university libraries

and catalogues, to the critic's ability to read in English. The dearth of Anglo-American publications touching on Cortés's field of research may also have contributed to his general neglect for it. Still, this glaring void in his bibliographies seems striking and testifies to the gulf between two seemingly disparate critical fields.

Llorenç Soldevila's study *Una novel·la són paraules: Introducció a l'obra de Mercè Rodoreda* (2000) can also be regarded as a case in point, but not without a qualification. His study was designed, and is in fact used, as a work of further reference for students in secondary schools (Triadú 2000: 72) –a defining feature, it needs to be noted, of many published studies, usually in the form of reading guides (Campillo and Gustà 1985; Oriol Giralt 1988). Bearing in mind the restricted scope and clear pedagogical function of such publications, one cannot expect to encounter an ample bibliographical substructure in Soldevila's book. However, the marked locality of the references used should not pass unnoticed either. In the section entitled "Què n'han dit?", where brief flavours of critical appraisals of Rodoreda's works are given, old 'ressenyas' by veteran critics such as Joan Triadú, Joaquim Molas or Pere Gimferrer are included (Soldevila 2000: 57-58, 78-80, 137-138). The only reference to non-Catalan criticism in the book is made towards the end, in a brief allusion to the availability of most of Rodoreda's works in translation across the world. As an illustration, Soldevila includes an excerpt by literary critic Rafael Conte apropos of the Spanish translation of *Quanta, quanta guerra...* (Soldevila 2000: 155-156). There is no mention whatsoever of Anglo-American readings of Rodoreda, save an erroneous classification of the translations available in English: the translations *The Pigeon Girl*, *My Christina and Other Stories*, and *Camellia Street* are grouped under the heading "A Anglaterra", as opposed to *The Time of the Doves*, which appears under "Als EUA" (Soldevila 2000: 189).

The 1987 monographic issue of *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda* was to a great measure the consecration of what was until then an incipient trend. Doing justice to one of the journal's main objectives, as were recently laid out by Joan Ramon Resina, namely "relligar dos àmbits tan poc relacionats com ho són la catalanística dels Països Catalans i la dels Estats Units" (Resina 2000: 31), this

volume gathers together work by authors conducting research on both sides of the Atlantic. There is, however, an already distinguishable division between the scopes of their articles. While the ones authored by Catalunya-based writers are of either biographic value (Murià 1987; Casals i Couturier 1987) or respond to rather rigid implementations of a series of analytical tools (psychoanalysis in the case of Poch and Planas's article), the studies penned by Anglo-American researchers or by Catalan scholars working in American universities, which form the majority in the volume, bear the hallmarks of a clearly professed feminist agenda and proceed according to more innovative interpretative equipment. In his introduction to the volume, Jaume Martí-Olivella praises this critical trend and sanctions the centrality of Anglo-American research for the development and establishment of this line of enquiry. Paradoxically, however, the 1987 issue includes one of the most solid contestations to Anglo-American academic focus on feminist reappraisals of Rodoreda. In his article 'The Link of Consciousness: Time and Community in Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', critic Joan Ramon Resina distrusts the validity of such focus and claims that, for all its revitalising thrust, it ultimately does a disservice to the original object of study. In his own words:

Attention to Rodoreda's works has come almost exclusively from feminist criticism, for reasons that have little to do with a genuine interest in the position of her work within the culture that produced it. By appropriating it as an illustration of feminist tenets, such critics have in fact substituted one hermeneutic ground for another, displacing the work from its geopolitical and historical coordinates to engraft it into a heterogeneous cultural and social movement that poses a universal. (Resina 1987: 226)

Resina's words seem to corroborate, beyond the censorious value and the charges of academic opportunism therein implied, the self-evident nature of the division between Catalan and Anglo-American scholarship on Rodoreda. The implications of such a bifurcation are legion and will come into view in the course of this chapter. In summary, these two strands of analysis seem to progress through an ongoing tacit mutual negotiation of their own respective scopes and parameters, which have broadened since their beginnings, but only seldom met. In the following two sections I will try to delineate what emerges as the divergent grand designs of these critical variants, that is, the underlying objectives, or informing principles on which most

studies seem to have been constructed. First I will turn to an analysis of Anglo-American scholarship on Rodoreda and of its primarily gynocentric orientation.

### 1.1.1 Rodoreda and Feminism

In a commemorative biographical sketch, Catalan poet and critic Marta Pessarrodona recalls the work and figure of Mercè Rodoreda twenty years after her death, and refers to the author as:

[...] uno de los grandes novelistas (genérico intencionado) del siglo XX, y hoy por hoy, seguramente uno de los autores (otra vez, genérico intencionado) más traducidos de la literatura catalana de todos los tiempos. (Pessarrodona 2003: 134)

The “genéricos intencionados” she employs could be subject to various readings, among which, an explicitly provocative intention can be glimpsed. By referring to Rodoreda with masculine forms of reference, and by doing so not in oblivion to the discriminatory partiality of the generic masculine, but rather, in full consciousness of it, Pessarrodona effects a sharp reaction to her undoubtedly encomiastic introduction, which may nevertheless be interpreted as equally vexing. With a kind of playfulness that derives from a thorough cognisance of the different drifts Rodoredian scholarship has taken both locally and internationally, the critic surreptitiously, but most effectively, opens the Pandora’s box of critical mis-encounters. The critic’s project does not seem literally to raise and commend Rodoreda’s literary status by masculinising its import and thus making it commensurate with a higher creative rank, but to stir up the dialogue with those critical sectors most sensitive to this kind of qualifications, that is, the gender-oriented strands of Rodoredian analysis. A certain antagonistic tone is not difficult to detect either. By referring to Rodoreda in a masculine-inflected language, a startling textual ruse, Pessarrodona jars on the ears of the critic trained in gender-related approaches to the Catalan author. An implicit exposition of the two different directions in Rodoredian scholarship seems to ensue: one intent on gender-aware readings of the author, and one beyond this approach (so far beyond, in fact, that it can afford to display an ironic distance from it).

Critics have signalled that the feminist-oriented approach to Rodoreda’s opus has been developed mainly by Anglo-American scholarship (Martí-Olivella 1987: 11; Resina 1987: 226; Mencos 1999: 244; Arkinstall 2004a: 13). This state of affairs has

been partly substantiated in the previous section. In what follows, I will offer further insights into the matter, by centring on a series of patterns emerging from the feminist writings on Rodoreda. Again, the point should be stressed that the mainstays adduced in these studies have not been exclusively maintained and elaborated upon by Anglo-American scholars. Claiming so would be to overlook an important sector within Catalan scholarship, mainly represented by Carme Arnau's early writings and most work by feminist scholar Neus Carbonell (1994a, 1994b, 1995). However, the woman-centred orientation of most works coming from Anglo-American academia is significantly more robust than any other theoretical inclination within that corpus, and discernibly steadier than in Catalan circles.

The feminist or gender-centred interpretative thrust dominating Anglo-American scholarship has yielded a multiplicity of ground-breaking readings, as well as a great deal of tautology. A most recurrent site of analysis has been the study of identity tropes from a gendered perspective through stylistic elucidation (Wyers 1983; Glenn 1986; Albrecht and Lunn 1987; Nance 1991; Lunn and Albrecht 1992; Vosburg 1999; Bieder 1999) and psychoanalytic frames (Busquets 1987; Martí-Olivella 1987b; Carbonell 1994; McGiboney 1994; Martí-Olivella 1999; Varderi 1999; Tobin Stanley 2003). Studies offering mainly thematic dissection also abound (Ortega 1983; Anderson 1999), with a more or less explicit focus on feminine imagery (Bergman 1987), the female body (Scarlett 1994a, 1994b), fictional/biographical juxtaposition (Pope 1991) and the experience of (double) exile as an intrinsically feminine circumstance (Nichols 1986; Bou 1994). More unusual tacks have also been occasionally attempted, such as Ellen Mayock's chromatic analysis of Natàlia's emotional range in *La plaça del Diamant* (Mayock 2000) or Josep-Antón Fernández's study of heterosexuality and motherhood in *La plaça...* as apocryphal assets of an unknowingly homosexual female protagonist (Fernández 1999). More recently, a veering towards affiliative and historicist analysis of Rodoreda's opus seems to have taken place. Kathryn Everly's innovative concession to a potential incorporation of surrealist techniques in Rodoreda's early, first-person narratives, and Christine Arkinstall's exploration of the underlying tensions between modernist and



noucentista guidelines<sup>1</sup> and Rodoreda's own subversive creative agenda, have inaugurated new lines of enquiry in this sense. Nevertheless, both books remain, as we have previously noted, strongly attached to feminist interpretations of Rodoreda's literary manoeuvres.

This generalised advocacy of a feminist valence to Rodoreda's work has had to confront the author's oft-cited animosity towards feminist politics, giving rise to iterative interpretative ploys aimed at arriving at a satisfactory meeting between the critic's insistence and the author's resistance on this matter. A particularly recurrent type of disclaimer is usually offered at the beginning of many studies where the centrality, or indeed the necessity, of a feminist approach overrides the author's repudiation of such readings, epitomised by her well-known asseveration: "Jo crec que el feminisme és com un xarmpió" (Rodoreda in Arnau and Oller 1991: 21). The powerful resonance of such a claim has made it difficult, and undesirable, for critics to skirt around this ideological conundrum, while at the same time trying to pass over its obstructive effect. Kathryn Everly has explained this apparent incompatibility as follows:

Rodoreda and Varo chose not to align themselves politically or artistically with feminism, yet this should not affect a justified feminist reading of their work. Historical labels only limit possibilities of interpretation and allow history and language to dictate meaning. Perhaps these two women would have joined the more mainstream feminist movement of the 1970s or perhaps not; in either case their work stretches to the limits of and directly challenges confabulated, patriarchal ideals of femininity. (Everly 2003: 32)

As above, one of the means of legitimising feminist readings of works whose authors vocally refuted its tenets has been to evoke a generational discrepancy between author and ideology, a traceable procedure also in several feminist analyses of the avant-garde writer Rosa Chacel (Mangini 1987; Maier 1992). What these studies generally allege is that Spanish women authors, because they have to operate against a backdrop of critical hostility or condescendence, will assume a masculinised mien as their creative persona, which will partly insulate them against their critics and peers' outright dismissal. Because women artists' estrangement from the spheres of

---

<sup>1</sup> For a recent introductory formulation of both currents as intrinsically overlapping or, as he puts it, of *Noucentisme* as "both a continuation and a reduction of *Modernisme*", see Arthur Terry's *A Companion to Catalan Literature* (2003: 84-87).

artistic production was, in almost definitional terms, more acute during modernism's apogee, these women's repudiation of anything feminine in their works was necessarily more adamant. Critic Catherine Bellver has analysed Chacel's refusal to affirm a gender-aware side to her writing and her over-identification with the patriarchal creative guidelines of Spanish avant-garde in this light:

By covering non-conventionality with her adoption of canonical practices, she validates herself as a master of respected art forms; by denying gender differentiation in artistic creation, she defers to patriarchal dominion in a gesture of accommodation that reinforces the traditional notion of women's artistic inferiority. (Bellver 2001: 120)

The crux of this rationale, however, is its emphasis on the Spanish women-author's status of unknowing victim of her own spatio-temporal enclave, and of her creative identity as an inextricable product of enforced self-adjustment which she is too culture-imbued to detect:

Rosa Chacel does not find the imitation of masculine modes problematic for the female writer. Seeing culture as male-generated, she finds no other option for women who want to participate in it than to follow the male lead. (Bellver 2001: 123-124)

The author (Rosa Chacel, Mercè Rodoreda) is thus turned into a tractable object of study for the critic who operates outside those constricting coordinates. Further, the researcher's advantageous hindsight into the growing apparatus of subsequent biographical and critical work on these authors, often implementing present-day theoretical frames that were not available at the time of the original text's production, renders his/her task an organic and constructive one. By dint of this critical twist, the connotations of an embattled inerration between the position maintained by the author during her own lifetime and the critics' interpretative stance as regards a feminist reading are somewhat dampened, in favour of an articulate critical idiom on the original work which the author herself, because of her inextricable connection with the discriminatory operations of her historical moment, could not have possibly glimpsed, let alone endorsed.

A different way of circumventing this apparent impasse often found in Anglo-American studies on Rodoreda is to dwell on a labile side to the author's manifestations on the feminist matter. Let us look at a possible articulation of such a train of thought by Elizabeth Rhodes:

It is because Rodoreda so frequently contradicted herself, leaving a glaring gap between what she said and did, or between what she said and wrote, that the gender issue in her works deserves a more careful reading than it typically gets. Further, the new alignment between Rodoreda's works and her biography, made possible by recent studies of her life, make it clear that there is an overall thematic unity between the vital conflicts with which her female, fictional characters struggle and Rodoreda's own. (Rhodes 1994: 165)

The conciliatory terms necessary for the feminist reading to proceed are here articulated through an appraisal of the author's persona in a purely biographical fashion. Because Rodoreda seemed to display an impudent tendency to conceal or disguise the minutiae of her private life (McNerney 1999: 9; Soldevila 2000: 15), some critics have fastened upon this feature of her personality with a view to pointing at the existence of opportune rifts and inconsistencies. The misgivings detected will thus enable the critic to question the veracity of the author's words and subsequently to approach the textual production as a congruent, uniform block betraying a consistency of concerns and forms that the author herself did not practise in real life. The former should thus take precedence over the latter at the time of justifying a feminist approach to Rodoreda's opus.

Paradoxically, the critics' investment in the texts' feminist legitimacy has given rise to instances of interpretative overstatement. With the purpose of further validating the oeuvre's feminist value, some scholars have fastened upon certain dubious readings of those novels which do not lend themselves readily to gender-centred interpretations. While I do not mean to imply that the exploration of the more far-fetched readings of a given work is an undesirable activity, it seems tenable to suggest that such an enterprise necessitates robust lines of argumentation. To elucidate this point, I will draw out the contrasts between two articles by Hispanist critics Lisa Vollendorf and Janet Pérez, where a feminist reading of the complex works *Mirall trencat* and *Quanta, quanta guerra...* is proposed. These two studies share the aim of expounding a gender-marked interpretation of two works which have frequently been the object of feminist scholars' neglect. By offering a feminist reading of them, these works are brought into line with what is taken to be Rodoreda's overall project, namely, to "protest the patriarchal practices that hinder the realization of women's potential for autonomy and power" (Vollendorf 1999:

158). However, the articles realise this objective to varying degrees of effectiveness, as I intend to show.

Lisa Vollendorf's "Exchanging Terms: Towards the Feminist Fantastic in *Mirall trenca*" (1999) strikes the reader for its forthright application of the term 'feminist'. Here a veritable declaration of intentions, the term is seldom used in so unequivocal a fashion by the majority of critics whose goal is, in like manner, to evince a feminist value of the work in hand. Vollendorf does not dwell at length on the author's well-known scorn for a feminist politics either. While she does mention this contingency, the point is pressed without delay for an unproblematic feminist reading of her opus: "In spite of Rodoreda's lack of sympathy for feminism, her texts clearly focus on a struggle for feminine subjectivity" (Vollendorf 1999: 158). The authoritativeness of her interpretative stance is made convincing through the article's solid theoretical foundation, which she voices from the outset:

In this study, I draw upon the analyses of commodification articulated by Gayle Rubin and Luce Irigaray in the 1970s in order to explore the critique of the patriarchy and of the institutionalization of female power in *Mirall trenca*. The use of feminist theory contemporary to the novel itself also forges an intellectual link between Rodoreda and feminist contemporaries: in spite of Rodoreda's lack of allegiance with the feminist cause, this analysis reveals that many of the author's critiques of the patriarchy were also being explored by feminist theorists of the same period. (Vollendorf 1999: 157-158)

The initial aporia between the author's words and the critic's working stance is resolved by calling forth the linkage of contemporaneity. Even though Rodoreda cannot be said to have been conversant with the emerging theoretical apparatus of feminist thought in the seventies, the critic sponsors here a notional connection, only permitted by the "peculiar, decontextualised logic" of a comparativist approach (Filippakopoulou 2003: 150), whereby original text and theoretical instrument are, if not mutually influential, at least coincidentally similar. The subsequent benefit that their juxtaposition offers on a symbolic level is enough for the critic to proceed. The argument thus unfolds for an appraisal of matriarchy in *Mirall trenca* as pierced by the debilitating structure of a patriarchal economy, whereby the female protagonists, albeit endowed with materialist forms of power, are nevertheless commodified objects of a transactional movement that transcends their handling. This reading is effected through an analysis of the consequences that this vicarious form of power

brings to those women in the novel, who in various ways conform to a system of exchange that necessarily objectifies them. Thematic instances of “the devaluation of the maternal, the repression of female sexuality” and the “divisiveness among women” (Vollendorf 1999: 159) are therefore foregrounded. Eventually, a more formalistic approach is applied, with a view to situate the novel’s integration of fantasy as an egress for women. By examining how the novel drifts away from a realistic mode into a fantastic one, Vollendorf speaks of a resilience of forms brought about by the latter, which allows for “a feminist future” where the maternal supersedes “the patriarchal economy of exchange” (Vollendorf 1999: 168). In proposing this reading, Vollendorf enters into dialogue with those theories of fantasy as a literary form which, due to its liminal, or rather peripheral status, suits the purposes of a feminist subversive agenda (Walker 1990). Rodoreda’s novel is thus placed within the tradition of women-authored political narratives by dint of a coherent and theoretically-grounded interpretative turn which counterbalances the weight of both the author and the original work’s elusive complexity.

Let us now turn to Janet Pérez’s ‘Presence of the Picaresque and the Quest Romance in Mercè Rodoreda’s *Quanta, quanta guerra...*’ (1993), where a feminist reading of the novel is also advanced. The article begins with a blanket statement which the critic leaves undocumented: “Spanish women writers generally depict only those aspects of war which they have personally experienced, especially war’s effects on women and children, usually from the perspective of non-combatants” (Pérez 1993: 428). A brief paraphrase of the novels’ plot leads the critic into a similarly sweeping genre classification: “*Quanta, quanta guerra...* is clearly an allegory, and one that is anti-nationalist or pacifist, as well as feminist” (Pérez 1993: 428). Surprisingly, there is little in the way of substantiation of this argument to be found in the remainder of the article, as Pérez turns to a rather nebulous analysis of those traits that might render the novel a work of picaresque value first, and later on to a review of those few studies on *Quanta, quanta guerra...* preceding her own. The only section of her analysis that could be interpreted as an exemplification of the novel’s feminist value is Pérez’s suggestion that the work can be read as a feminised version of the quest romance (Pérez 1993: 433). However, because much of the

article's volume is devoted to a thematic analysis focusing on the character of Adrià, Pérez's final assertion as to the feminist transgression exercised in the novel has a somewhat forced feel to it:

As a demythifying of war and masculine heroics, a subversion of the ideological or political justifications alleged, as well as a powerful depiction of the heroism of women raped and victimized, *Quanta, quanta guerra...* conforms to the paradigm of the feminized quest romance at the same time that it transcends gender. (Pérez 1993: 437)

In sum, an overriding drive to ascribe a feminist value to the novel seems to underlie this study, beyond the critic's means to validate it convincingly. This *modus operandi* reflects the generalised tendency either forcefully to extract feminist readings from the bulk of Rodoreda's works or, as we are about to see, to neglect or contort those works that do not easily lend themselves to this form of analysis. A recurring hermeneutical twist also occurring in some gender-oriented studies of Rodoreda's writings involves a particular approach to the (for some, unwelcome) presence of masculine protagonists in her narrative. A distinct intention to neutralise the appearance of male characters and protagonists in many of Rodoreda's narratives can be detected, whereby the masculine figures are attributed an androgynous significance. While this is an amply documented aspect of Rodoredian characterisation, introduced and addressed especially by Catalan scholarship (Arnau 1990: 149-156; Cortés i Orts 1995: 19, 23; Cortés 2002: 203), certain American critics have gone beyond it and supported not only an androgynous facet of Rodoreda's male characters but an explicitly female one. In other words, Rodoredian male protagonists are divested of any defining specificity and analysed as subsidiary variants of the author's overriding intent to tap into a woman's subjectivity. Frequently, the feminisation of male characters is conducted by means of a socio-symbolic interpretation of their characteristic isolation or lack of agency as symptomatic of a female stance, as Geraldine Nichols does below with regard to the male characters in the short stories "Nit i boira" and "Cop de lluna":

Both men find themselves thrust into a system which defines them as inferiors, denying them mobility, autonomy, or any prospect of control [...] Simultaneously, they begin to adopt the self-protective comportment of structural inferiors, using the model of subordination they are most familiar with: they become "females". (Nichols 1986: 408)

In like manner, critic Kathleen M. Glenn places Rodoredian characters, male and female, in one and the same category of inferiority, namely as peripheral sub-entities relegated to the margins of society:

Throughout the text runs a thread of violence, subtle and blatant, verbal and physical, threatened and actualised. Its victims, be they young or old, single or married, females or feminized males, are marginal beings, objects rather than subjects, acted upon rather than acting, dwelling on the fringes of society rather than integrated within it. Rodoreda has recorded their muted voices so that we might hear –and see. (Glenn 1987: 142)

A different strand of criticism can be discerned, however, which problematises this aspect of Rodoreda's narrative in seemingly irrefutable terms, alleging a numerical imbalance between male and female protagonists in the whole of her oeuvre that is, however, not easily demonstrable. The words of critic Emilie Bergman below can be said to effect this rather twisty critical manoeuvre:

Almost all Rodoreda's narrator-protagonists are female, and the few who are male are associated with the traditionally female qualities of change and renewal, or with the supernatural. (Bergman 1987: 89)

The above-delineated tendency to minimise the import of Rodoreda's male character creations has reached its cusp in Pérez and Ihrie's *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature* (2002). The work of Mercè Rodoreda appears here in a somewhat fragmented fashion, owing to the fact that the author was a Catalan who wrote unswervingly in Catalan. However, the fact that her name appears in three different general entries in the encyclopedia (namely, those for "Short Fiction by Women Writers", "Catalan Women Writers", and "Detective Fiction by Spanish Women Writers") gives a measure of the author's salient status within peninsular letters. The entry for Catalan women writers, authored by Rodoredian expert Kathleen McNerney, is significantly telling of the diffractive slant informing Anglo-American diffusion of Rodoreda's work. Here, the existence of male characters in the original work is neither interpretatively appropriated as a further confirmation of its feminist value, nor is it diminished in number or worth, but disqualified altogether from the overall picture. Without losing sight of the, by necessity, summary dimensions of an encyclopedic entry, the exclusion of any reference to those works with a male protagonist or narrator cannot be taken as adventitious. In the following paragraph,

where a brief overview of Rodoreda's fictional production is offered, the conjoining element of the female narrator/protagonist grants the literary panorama in hand harmonious coherence. The barring of Rodoreda's late masterpieces *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera* (both articulated through a male narrative voice) from any textual presence spares the encyclopedic account of an unwanted jarring element. As reproduced below, general information about the author's fictional production is advanced which expands on the connection between *La plaça del Diamant* as the fundamental point of departure for a solidly women-oriented literary project:

This tragic setting [the one in *La plaça...*] is seen through the eyes of a lower-class woman whose narration is only apparently simple; in fact Rodoreda creates an exquisite idiom, full of lyricism and vitality. Other Rodoredan novels also use female protagonists: *Aloma* (1938) features a young woman trying to make the best of the few choices she has in life; in *El carrer de les Camèlies* (1966; *Camellia Street*, 1993), the orphaned Cecília C narrates her horrendous existence as a brutalized kept woman; and Teresa Goday of *Mirall trencat* (1974; *Broken Mirror*) is the focal point of several generations of a well-to-do Barcelona family. (McNerney in Pérez and Ihrle 2002: 118)

Panoramic accounts such as those required by encyclopaedic formats provide an invaluable testing ground when analysing paths of critical dissemination. In the case of Rodoreda, the process of diffusion of her work within the Anglo-American scholarly circuit seems to have been informed by an attempt to present the original work as predominantly feminist. As we have seen, this process has not occurred without its conjunctive snags. More or less adroit handlings of Rodoreda's dismissal of a feminist politics have become an opening fixture in many studies. At the level of interpretation, occasional efforts have been made to hustle Rodoreda's later works into gender-oriented critical moulds, also to varying degrees of persuasiveness. Ultimately, it should be born especially in mind that the generalised option has been to neglect or dismiss these works, particularly *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera*, out of hand, a phenomenon that critic Christine Arkininstall comments upon at the beginning of her study:

Furthermore, the attention of scholars has been held by those texts that best exemplify the theoretical issues dear to feminist theories, such as *Aloma* [Aloma], *La plaça del Diamant*, *El carrer de les Camèlies* [Camellia Street], *Mirall trencat* [Broken Mirror],



and certain short stories, and have tended to dismiss those works that do not easily permit readings of this type. (Arkinstall 2004a: 13)

Though the implications of such an economics of diffusion are, in actual matter of fact, of a distortional quality, its overall effect can be vouchsafed a somewhat more affirmative value. For Rodoreda's international leap may not only be explained reductively in terms of the critics' decimating focus on its feminist value but, conversely, as facilitated by it. In other words, it was through the foregrounding of this one aspect of Rodoreda's literary production that Anglo-American critical attention on her was initiated and gradually multiplied, thus salvaging it from the arguably scantier regard it had received up to then outside the Catalan borders. The fact that three of her books have been made available in English in the span of ten years, together with a formidably large apparatus of critical works which continues to be energised to date across the international scene, can only be a cause for gratification. The ongoing insistence on the feminist premises of the original work can be regarded as a circumscribing channel, a narrow gap through which international transmission has been and continues to be thinned down, but a channel after all, and as such, a means for the passage of exogenous literary capitals that would otherwise remain unmapped.

### **1.1.2 Mercè Rodoreda: Novelist or Multifaceted Artist?**

If the thrust informing Anglo-American critical reception of Rodoreda's work has been to (over-)emphasise its import for the gender-oriented strands of Hispanism, the project undertaken by Catalan research on the author can be said to take on a wider purview. Catalan criticism on the author has been at pains to reinforce an image of the artist that defies any attempts at facile categorisation. Her status, indeed that of a national literary emblem, has been consolidated over time through a wide-ranging critical coverage of her creative output. The weight of the adjective 'national' cannot be overemphasised in this context. While Anglo-American academia has granted scant consideration to the strong nationalist thrust of Rodoreda's literary project, Catalan critics have consistently, and understandably, dwelled upon it, thus injecting the bulk of her work with a political vigour that precedes and transcends a purely feminist agenda (Saludes i Amat 1995: 58; Soldevila 2000: 16). Rodoreda's oft-

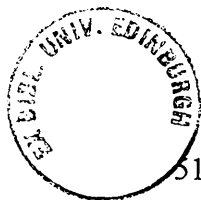
quoted words “A treballar, a escriure, a veure si faig alguna cosa que el dia de demà pesi en el meu país” (Rodoreda 1940, in Rodoreda 1985: 45), written at a time of acute financial hardship and emotional tribulation, are a testimony to her personal source of creative energy, inextricably linked to her heartfelt Catalanism. Local critical idioms have therefore sought to do full justice to Mercè Rodoreda’s stature, an enterprise which needs to be read as a means to achieve a salutary national self-aggrandisement. The present foray into this ongoing critical project will first review the various regions of the author’s work which have been valuably brought to the fore by Catalunya-based publications, as opposed to persisting Anglo-American focus on her novels and short stories. Ultimately, I mean to advance an examination of the contrasting identity metaphors and tropes developing in the two critical strands. In a nutshell, while the goal articulated by local voices has been to ‘universalise’ the work and figure of Mercè Rodoreda by reinforcing the diversity of her output and by circulating a body of metaphors that foment her reception as a polymath and an autodidact, Anglo-American criticism has paradoxically produced an international dialogue on the author which proceeds by assuming a quantitative lessening of its original variform nature. All in all, Rodoreda’s international status has had to be pinned down, made meaningful, through its persistent association with a feminist agenda. Occasionally, moreover, certain metaphors of lack have been disseminated that identify Rodoreda’s distinctively oral and simplified writing mode with the educational depravation she suffered during her formative years (Pope 1991: 117; Scarlett 1994b: 81), a thesis that is vigorously dismissed by Catalan critics, who insist more consistently on the carefully studied linguistic façade of her literary style. Ultimately, this exposition aims to demonstrate that, while Rodoreda remains locally an incommensurable artistic entity of an iconic value, internationally, a traceable exercise of homogenisation and almost strategic selection had to be implemented for a critical dialogue to emerge and be safeguarded.

The year 2002 was a particularly prolific one for Catalan scholarship on Mercè Rodoreda. Almost at once, three monographic volumes were published that probed into some of the most sparsely investigated areas of her creative output, namely her poetry, her theatre and her five pre-War novels. The first two came out under the

auspices of the Fundació Mercè Rodoreda, an institution operating within the frame of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans whose instrumental role in the patronage, encouragement, and cataloguing of critical works on the author, as well as in the preservation and management of her artistic and personal patrimony, cannot not be overly emphasised.

Carles Cortés's *Començar a escriure: la construcció dels primers relats de Mercè Rodoreda (1932-1938)* is the only published doctoral thesis available on the author after Carme Arnau's pioneering publication in 1979. Cortés's contention is, in his own words: "observar la connexió estilística entre les obres anteriors i les posteriors a la guerra" (2002: 17), thus superseding the generalised lack of interest in these works, which can be explained by the author's own dismissal of their literary value, but also by dint of a somewhat contagious, word-of-mouth influence, whereby certain works are always subject to critical neglect even before appraisals of any kind have been conducted. A connective tissue is thus formed which brings Rodoreda's juvenilia into the light by presenting these books as the early manifestations of what was to become a multifarious, and yet immensely coherent literary voice. *Sóc una dona honrada?*, *Del que hom no pot fugir*, *Un dia de la vida d'un home*, *Crim*, and the first version of *Aloma* are therefore not, as the critic puts it: "fets literaris aïllats" but "els esborranys d'un estil propi, intimista i profund, d'una autora preocupada per l'expressió interior dels seus personatges principals" (Cortés 2002: 17). Despite Cortés's declaration of intentions, his study is somewhat stifled by too formalist a design. Lengthy sections are devoted to the study of structuralist, in fact Genettian, categories such as prolepsis, analepsis, cronotopes and the like, together with prolix analyses of the seemingly fissile narratological entities of characters, plot lines and levels of discourse, applied to each and every novel separately and in dutiful linear fashion. There is, as a consequence, a remarkable amount of tautology in his study, which despite its entirely innovative object of analysis, paradoxically displays a somewhat passé configuration, which maims its potential utility for scholars.

Francesc Massip and Monserrat Palau's *L'obra dramàtica de Mercè Rodoreda* moves along more integrative lines. As the first analysis of the whole of Rodoreda's dramatic production, which comprises five complete plays, two unfinished ones, and



a series of sketches, this book shares with the above and, as we shall see, with the triad of the 2002 publications, the objective of illuminating the more neglected facets of Rodoreda's creative talent. Again, the versatility of her genius is here emphasised by approaching her dramatic output not as a form of ancillary production but as a life-long endeavour to which the author felt attached from a very early age. Whilst their study does not entirely free itself from structuralist guidelines (attentive consideration is given to the analysis of structures, themes and characters as discrete categories), it does benefit from the critical leeway provided by a more diversifying approach. Thus, pertinent streaks of feminist literary criticism are incorporated, though not fully assumed, in their approach to Rodoreda's somewhat Manichean characterisation of male and female characters (Massip and Palau 2002: 147, 150) or in their analysis of women and the passing of time in Kristevian terms (Massip and Palau 2002: 88). Genre affiliations are also delineated, as well possible lines of influence on the author's dramatic imagery, such as a generalised likening (initiated by her editor Joan Sales) with Artaud's 'theatre of the absurd'. A highly valuable section is their final account of the different stagings of Rodoreda's plays and narrative fiction carried out throughout the 80s and 90s, a section no doubt enriched by the study of both their critical and popular reception at the time. The closing remarks point to Rodoreda's untimely death just when her dramatic production was beginning to be more or less steadily staged, thus reinforcing the study's working thesis that "d'haver pogut estrenar a temps, Rodoreda hauria escrit més teatre o, almenys, hauria refet substancialment els textos que van quedar inconclusos o sense revisió dramàtica" (Massip and Palau: 299).

Also of 2002 is the miscellaneous publication *Agonia de llum: La poesia secreta de Mercè Rodoreda*. Although presented as Rodoreda's complete works of poetry, the book includes in fact most of her paintings (mainly watercolours), as well as a compilation of her correspondence with Catalan poet Josep Carner, whose impact on Rodoreda's own poetry the book underscores. Abraham Mohino i Balet's introduction to the volume provides an innovative insight into the underlying motivations for Rodoreda's shifting into poetry. Relying strongly on accurate biographical detail, Mohino i Balet puts forward an understanding of Rodoreda's

poetry as a compelling passageway for her ebullient creative drive at a time when emotional tribulation was acutely densified. The critic puts the onus on a specific date, the 19 September 1946, when her partner Armand Obiols's lawful wife resolves to visit him in Bordeaux, and on the severe psychological affliction that took hold of Rodoreda for a time thereafter, as he asserts: "No voldria que semblés gratuït de situar aquí, en aquest punt exacte, el detonant afectiu que explica l'ingrés de Rodoreda en la poesia" (2002: 19). In locating the causes for Rodoreda's brief, yet earnest poetical output, equivalent weight is granted to the influence of the also exiled poet Josep Carner, to the extent of stating that "A Carner s'ha d'atribuir la responsabilitat directa del despertar a la poesia de Mercè Rodoreda" (Mohino i Balet 2002: 22). An optimal justification is thus advanced for the insertion of the writers' private correspondence, held between 1939 and 1953, which gives ample evidence of the spirited rapport between them, and of Carner's fundamental role as provider of encouragement, feedback, and as a tutelary point of reference. *Agonia de llum* collates lyrical, pictorial, and epistolary material in an attempt to provide the reader with the right measure of Rodoreda's creative ductility and ambition, thus contributing to the seemingly concerted project of Catalan scholarship of legitimating an understanding of her value as a "figura polièdrica" of Catalan arts (Mohino i Balet 2002: 11).

This legitimising drive detectable across Catalan scholarship on the author is not, despite its more recent impetus, a present-day one. Work on her less studied creative facets has been carried out and consistently published, as shown by the earlier work of Massip and Palau (1996), Casals i Couturier (1993), Albert Pastor (1994) or Anna Maria Saludes i Amat (1993) regarding the dramatic output, and the work of Mercè Ibarz (1991), Isabel Saludes (1991), or Josep Balsach (1993) as regards Rodoreda's painting. A monographic publication is also available exclusively on her short-story collections (*Actes del Primer Simposi Internacional de Narrativa Breu*, 1998), where even her pre-War children's narrative is analysed (Cortès i Orts 1998: 306-312; Campillo 1998: 323-326) Perhaps her poetry has been more scantily studied, but nevertheless frequently acknowledged and commented upon in more comprehensive

studies (Soldevila 2000: 108-112), where mentions of her theatre and paintings are also usually made.

A separate reference needs to be made also to the substantial amount of research carried out by Catalunya-based scholars on Rodoreda's journalistic work (Muñoz Lloret 1992-1993; Saludes i Amat 1995; Porta 1998). Long forgotten or disregarded, due partly to evident restrictions on availability and access to them, Rodoreda's dedication to journalistic writing in the thirties has now been repeatedly explored and analysed not only as a mere stylistic workshop, but as the primeval manifestation of a writing mode already suffused with inklings of a highly personal character. One of these features, explored by Roser Porta in her study of Rodoreda as a satirical writer, is the author's ingrained sense of humour, which yielded the witty, somewhat fierce style that gained her a great deal of peer animadversion at the time. Porta sheds light on the crossfire maintained by Rodoreda, writing for the short-lived satirical magazine *Clarisme* and the writers of *El Be Negre*, a better-established publication that was in fact *Clarisme*'s point of reference, and tries to expose the sexist operations often underlying the attacks directed at Rodoreda, due to her status as "una dona de caràcter extrovertit, que es permet el luxe d'escriure en un to lúdic i d'exhibir certs tocs de frivolitat a les seves novel·les" (Porta 1998: 54). Studies such as these have lain in the exclusive purview of Catalan academia until very recently. Christine Arkinstall articulates in her 2004 study an analysis of Rodoreda's pre-War novel *Un dia en la vida d'un home* and of its satirical attack on Noucentisme's call for a sanitisation of the Catalan language and arts, in the light of her also satirical journalistic columns and with particular emphasis on the polemics between *Clarisme* and *El Be negre* at the time (Arkinstall 2004a: 74-79). Her study enters into dialogue with Catalan scholarly work on Rodoreda's journalistic output, especially with Roser Porta's article above, and thus bridges the abyss between Anglophone and Catalan critical entities beyond their often merely gestural rapport.

As I have tried to demonstrate in this necessarily panoramic overview of Catalan criticism on Rodoreda, there has been an omnidirectional coverage of her creative production, with substantial critical weight being granted to her dramatic, plastic, and poetic endeavours, and to her narrative fiction, including both her works of maturity

and the pre-exile ones. A corresponding sideline to this all-embracing activity has been to foster the view of Mercè Rodoreda as a dedicated intellectual, both an omnivorous reader and an untiring worker, whose talent was polished with the most sedulous care and perfectionist dedication. A frequent critical device in this sense is to refer to the wide apparatus of potential influences and fundamental readings (either overtly acknowledged or implied by Rodoreda herself in prologues and interviews), which may have had a decisive impact on the author's own formation. Thus, multiple mentions of Rodoreda as an avid reader of Homer or Pound, or a declared admirer of Faulkner (Pessarrodona 2003: 136), or Poe (Arnau 1989: 57) frequently intercut some critics' work.<sup>2</sup> Unflagging emphasis is also placed on the author's own stylistic quest, her will to create a distinctive mode of expression in her narrative, a critical endeavour which has usually translated into frequent mentions of the stylistic prowess and premeditation in novels such as *La plaça del Diamant*, *El carrer de les Camèlies*, or *La mort i la primavera*. Images of perfectionism and conscientious self-command are often brought to the fore, from Mercè Ibarz's passing commentary regarding the editorial process of *La plaça del Diamant* that "tenia molt i molt pensades cadascuna de les frases que escrivia" (Ibarz 1991: 93) to Neus Carbonell's seeming urgency in stressing this fact in the conclusion to her monographic volume on the same novel, which is worth quoting here at length:

Paradoxalment, un discurs que recrea l'angoixa existencial és també un text estilísticament molt controlat. En aquest sentit pot semblar contradictori que la narració, per tal de transmetre la sensació de falta d'autoritat, hagi de ser molt elaborada. L'estil és utilitzat amb precisió per reproduir l'allunyament del poder de Natàlia-personatge. [...] Naturalment, no hi ha res d'espontani ni en l'estil ni en la narració. Rodoreda ha creat una intensa sensació d'oralitat a través de l'escriptura, i ha representat la manca de poder gràcies a un discurs que recrea la manca de control sobre l'experiència i angoixa existencial amb un estil controlat amb precisió. (Carbonell 1994: 56-58)

The thrust of such critical commonplaces, arguably to fortify the view of Rodoreda as an accomplished autodidact bent on overcoming the early lack of instruction during her childhood, has at times faced a somewhat conflicting view coming from Anglo-American circles. While the tendency to stress the conscientious spadework behind

---

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of Rodoreda's readings and literary influences, see Carme Arnau's 'Mercè Rodoreda, contista (1933-1974). Una aproximació a la seva evolució i influències' (1998).

Rodoreda's narrative output is generally dimmer or less visibly concerted, there have been occasional references to a direct, underlying link between her lack of institutional education and her predominantly oral, seemingly unsophisticated writing style. Randolph Pope's explication of this correlation in his partly biographical article "Rodoreda's Subtle Greatness" is a case in point, a thesis that resonates also in the words of Elizabeth Scarlett, reproduced consecutively:

When she was only nine years old her grandfather became seriously ill and her mother decided to keep Mercè, her only child, at home from school to keep with the household chores. Years later she lamented that she never learned how to do division, to her a loss symbolic of her exclusion from many sectors of human enterprise and knowledge. Rodoreda's texts would subsequently concentrate on love and life at home, while they would grow fuzzy and sound hollow when trying to describe the worlds of finance, commerce or industry, a deficiency that contributed to the weakness of many of her male characters. (Pope 1991: 117)

Her choice of protagonists also relates to the author's social status as the daughter of a petit-bourgeois family who could not afford to continue sending her to school while she was still young. (Scarlett 1994b: 101-102)

What could in principle come across as a brief and weightless sideswipe may be studied as a poorly documented remark which nevertheless strongly opposes, even reverses, not only the timbre but the entire underpinning drive of Catalan (self)-enhancing critical projections of Rodoreda. It could be sustained that while the locally articulated image of the author is one of an all-round artist whose creative capacity yielded noteworthy results in genres and forms beyond narrative fiction, a sector within Anglo-American academia has alternatively dwelled on a less capacious, though arguably equally powerful, critical projection, namely that of the deprived woman artist, perpetually operating from a disadvantaged position and moved by a life-long will to overcome it. As a consequence, what for most Catalan critics is idiosyncratic prowess and premeditated stylistic façade, may be seen as experiential limitation by Anglo-American ones, mainly gauged by the yardstick of womanhood and educational lack. Once more, tropes of aggrandisement are confronted with the differing critical attitude of fastening upon certain potential weaknesses or stereotyping sites of tension, such as gender or (intellectual) class struggle, therefore disseminating the view of the subaltern, yet widely acclaimed artist who managed to attract worldwide recognition 'in spite of'.



The universalising motif underlying Catalan Rodoredian scholarship has nevertheless been subject to noteworthy internal critique. In her book-length study of *La plaça del Diamant*, Neus Carbonell offers an explanation for the dearth of gender-oriented studies on Rodoreda within Catalan academia by casting aspersions precisely on its focus on the more allegedly 'universal' aspects of her work. After addressing the widely accepted division between these two critical strands, Carbonell self-critically observes that:

Sovint de manera equivocada, reductiva i simplificadora, quan es parla de crítica literària feminista s'assumeix que el que es vol demostrar és que l'autora és feminista i que les seves obres són una vindicació dels drets de la dona. Per desqualificar la validesa d'aquest discurs interpretatiu, s'esgrimeixen els comentaris públics que Rodoreda va fer per desmarcar-se del feminisme militant, o es considera que aquestes preocupacions, en cas que existissin, són marginals a l'obra de l'autora mentre que d'altres hi són més importants i "universals". (Carbonell 1994: 11)

Ultimately, the widespread focus on the prevailing, 'universal' traits of Rodoreda's opus conceals an equally biased interpretative programme, as partial as the one it tries to counteract, whereby the illusory construction of unqualifiedly human value is assumed to supersede any politically driven one. The adjective 'universal' is however defined by means of equally selective processes and ideologically inflected qualifications which, more often than not, align themselves with hegemonic forms of discourse. To put it in Carbonell's words:

En tot cas, de manera general i contrària a aquestes afirmacions, es pot dir que els estudis que des d'aquesta òptica s'han fet intenten demostrar el tractament de la problemàtica de la dona i de la categoria sexual i del gènere, és a dir, de la construcció cultural del sexe, en l'obra rodorediana. Afirmar que això és d'interès particular és resultat d'una ideologia que institueix amb qualitat d'universal només els interessos i les preocupacions dels sectors dominants. (Carbonell 1994: 11)

One of the means to imbue Rodoreda's opus with universal gravitas within Catalan academia, a tendency also denounced by Carbonell in the above study (Carbonell 1994: 9), has been persistently to identify and overemphasise the male hand in instigating or shaping Rodoreda's intellectual formation. A considerable number of studies have attempted to calibrate, generally through a positive prism, the real influence of a series of male figures who orbited the author during her lifetime. Substantial attention is of course directed to Armand Obiols, her lifelong companion, but also to her editor Joan Sales, the poet Josep Carner, and the intellectual and

pedagogue Delfi Dalmau earlier on in her life. Often, these studies support the notion that these men's influence was not only important, but in fact crucially defining for Rodoreda's work, a thesis conceptually strengthened by the kind of peremptory language used in them. For example, Llorenç Soldevila refers to Obiols in the following way: "en la trajectòria artística de Rodoreda hi va haver un peça clau, Armand Obiols qui, intel·ligentment, li valorava tots els escrits i, Rodoreda, durant molts anys, fins pràcticament el 1971, any de la mort d'Obiols a Viena, l'escoltà i el seguí" (Soldevila 2000: 43). In a similar vein, Carles Cortés has also recently assessed the influence of both Armand Obiols and Joan Sales on Rodoreda's narrative production (Cortés 2000). Although his study offers very little in the way of well-documented biographical detail (a great part of the article is devoted to a lengthy praise of Carme Arnau's work), his conclusion vocally propounds an understanding of Obiols and Sales as key overseers of Rodoreda's style:

Podem concloure, doncs, destacant l'importància del mestratge intel·lectual en la creació i en la publicació rodorediana per part de dos intel·lectuals i crítics relacionats íntimament amb l'autora. Tant Obiols com Sales es mostren, al nostre parer, com factors bàsics per entendre algunes de les innovacions estilístiques que l'escriptora inclourà en els seus textos, a mesura que madura la seva expressivitat literària. L'acció del primer d'aquests assessors s'executa en l'organització i l'estructuració d'alguns dels textos més emblemàtics de l'autora. L'acció del segon es concreta en la consecució d'unes opcions lingüístiques i estilístiques concretes una vegada els textos es troben en una situació més avançada. (Cortés 2000: no pages available)

In her study of Rodoreda's pre-exile journalistic output, Saludes i Amat underscores the guidance received by Delfi Dalmau as an essential one. As an intellectual and renowned teacher, Dalmau is presented as the instrumental mentor who directed and encouraged Rodoreda at the very onset of her literary career. The piece reproduced below acquires highly laudatory tones, which presses the point further for this figure's decisive influence on the young author:

Les arrels de l'activitat periodística de Mercè Rodoreda es troben a redós de l'amistat i la col·laboració amb el professor Delfi Dalmau. [...] És evident que, sense el suport d'un mestre i guia, l'escriptora no hauria assolit certs objectius. Com també és evident que Delfi Dalmau descobrí molt aviat els dots creadors i les inquietuds de la futura novel·lista. Uns mèrits que el pedagog no va dubtar a fer públics. (Saludes i Amat 1995: 58)

All these studies seem to attest to what Carbonell described as "la persistència a buscar "l'home" darrera de l'èxit d'una dona" (Carbonell 1994: 9). I contend that,

beyond the probable androcentric drive underlying these assumptions, they can be interpreted also as a periphrastic way of ascribing greater momentousness to Rodoreda's talent in particular and to her opus as a whole. To put it differently, the universality of her work seems to be validated by the fact that her creative output was not only instilled, but appraised in a sieve-like fashion by a series of male figures whose status as all-round intellectuals is rarely questioned.

In contrast with the generalised enhancing of these male figures' guidance by Catalunya-based academics, two articles have been published within the Anglo-American critical environs that impugn their overall nourishing direction by assigning them a more thwarting effect. Randolph Pope's '*Aloma's* Two Faces and the Character of Her True Nature' (Pope 1994) explores the revised version of *Aloma* (1969) in the light of Armand Obiols's somewhat skewed assistance in the rewrite. Pope's argument advocates that the first version's playing up of the female protagonist's emotions and desire was significantly curbed in the benefit of a more composed, neutral character. Josefina González uses this article as a point of departure and presses the hypothesis further by talking of a veritable "censorship" in Obiols's guidance (González 1999: 191). In her article, attuned to a feminist politics, she speaks of a post-Obiols narrative production, where Rodoreda's penchant for the detailed description of objects (seen here as analogous to a patriarchal economics of perception) is visibly blurred in the benefit of a more symbolic, figurative language. Obiols's influence is therefore interpreted as limiting, even pernicious, and Rodoreda's later production as lying closer to her creative core.

In conclusion, the critical trends delineated in this section come to fortify the ones already adumbrated in the previous one. In the main, Catalan scholarly work on Rodoreda has proffered an image of the author who exceeds all attempts at clear-cut classification, that is an author whose wide-ranging creative outlet "es resisteix a l'encasellament" (Ibarz 1991: 13). Consequently, studies that bring to the light the more usually skirted facets of her work have been consistently sponsored and made available, in a concerted attempt to "impedir amb la lectura la seva momificació" (Ibarz 1997b: 7). A number of salient tendencies have been detected amongst this type of work, namely an endeavour to disseminate the image of Rodoreda as an

untiring autodidact and an exceptionally well-versed reader (Cortés 2000), whose work unfolded alongside the constant enriching influence and guidance of a series of consummate (male) intellectual figures. Thus, a universal valence is assigned to her work, which excels a woman-centred parameter. The counterpoise to this pattern is usually articulated from Anglo-American academia, still currently characterised by a persistent focus on those genres (novels, short stories) and works (*La plaça del Diamant*, *El carrer de les Camèlies*, *La meva Cristina i altres contes*) to which a feminist reading can be more easily superimposed.

As has been previously suggested, this pattern has been significantly counteracted by Christine Arkinstall's 2004 study. Her book articulates a line of argument which brings Rodoreda's narrative production under one and the same programmatic thrust, namely her "acknowledgement of the commitment of aesthetics to historical experience [which] results in her engagement with the material processes of personal and collective subjectivity, always founded on the specificities of gender, class, and national identity" (Arkinstall 2004a: 192). There are several ways in which this study signals a departure from the critical patterns in Anglo-American publications outlined so far. In the first instance, the object of study comes to prominence. Arkinstall's analysis brings Rodoreda's pre-War novels under the spotlight, an enterprise that had only been attempted within American criticism in a sparse and far from systematic manner. Also, it grants substantial consideration to one of the novels of maturity that has been most flagrantly sidestepped by American academics, namely *La mort i la primavera*. To the question of why these two creative regions (the pre-War novels, on one side, and the staggeringly unique *La mort...* on the other) have been so significantly neglected, Arkinstall offers a list of plausible explanations, most of which have been directly addressed in this chapter:

The question that must be asked is whether Rodoreda's earlier works are indeed inferior or whether they have been ignored because they have not met the theoretical and always political criteria that critics and others have been concerned to find in them. Striking also is the comparative dearth of critical studies on two of Rodoreda's later texts, *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera*. One wonders whether this lack of attention is due to their alleged difficulty; to a rejection of their critique of their potential destructiveness of nationalisms at a time when Catalunya is strengthening its national identity; to the fact that the protagonists are male, thus making a feminist analysis less likely; or to a conservatism that considers that female

writers should not address specifically the traditionally male themes of war and nationalism. (Arkinstall 2004a: 196)

From a methodological stance, Arkinstall's work is also groundbreaking insofar as it desegregates Catalan and Anglo-American received wisdom on the author. An itemised glance at the bibliographical references proves that both local and international critical works have been consulted and incorporated, a working procedure no doubt required by the study's line of argumentation, but which nevertheless makes it all the more unusual within a polarised scholarship on Rodoreda. Lastly, Arkinstall's overall argument is itself a step outside the either/or dichotomy here expounded between feminist and universalising approaches to Rodoreda. Her analysis dwells on gender-based figurations when it pertinently addresses the "gender biases of modernism" (Arkinstall 2004a: 26) in the novels *Aloma* and *El carrer de les Camèlies*. However, to relocate the feminist value of such works is not the underlying aim in her study, but to bring them into the broader picture of a literary project that is unheeding of modernist fixities, among which gender is of course a pivotal axis. Ultimately, Arkinstall's book effects a universalising validation of Rodoreda's narrative output as committed to the blurring of hierarchised visions, as a project that is "inclusive rather than exclusive; polyphonic, not univocal; pluralist, not reductionist" (Arkinstall 2004a: 198), a conclusive description that resonates more powerfully with Catalan critics' expansive figurations of the author than with the more fixative American ones.

## **1.2 Assessing the Consequences of the Schism: The Lights and Shadows of Anglo-American Scholarship on Rodoreda**

In this final section I would like to advance some possible corollaries to the critical division outlined in the course of this chapter by turning to the more localised consequences of Anglo-American criticism's long-standing focus on feminist approaches to Rodoreda, since a consideration of these will serve as a link with the

next chapter. In general terms, the persistent will to support and demonstrate an overall feminist reading to Rodoreda's narrative has progressed alongside a tacit neglect of her more conceptually baffling later work. The novels *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera* have been usually neglected as a result of the necessary process of selection therefore undertaken, a process which has been not only acknowledged by some critics (Arkinstall 2004a: 13), but condemned by others as concealing a "selective hierarchy of Rodoreda's *oeuvre*" whereby certain works are "neglected for the benefit of a critical thesis" (Resina 1987: 226). The general unpopularity of these novels has been also indicated within Catalan academia, especially from the point of view of reader expectations (Pessarrodona 1983: 19; Ibarz 1991: 15), but a considerable amount of critical attention has been, nevertheless, granted to them (particularly represented in the work of Carme Arnau and Carles Cortés). Moreover, several critics have placed them at the cusp of Rodoreda's narrative artistry. Critic Joan Triadú has described them as the novels where "Mercè Rodoreda s'esmerça amb més temps i esforços a deixar la marca més genuïna i més original del seu geni" (Triadú 2000: 71). Margarida Aritzeta advanced an analysis of *La mort i la primavera* as "un text que lliga perfectíssimament amb l'evolució que ha anat fent la narrativa de la Rodoreda a través dels anys" (Aritzeta 1987: 47), and also lauded *La mort...* and *Quanta, quanta guerra...* with the highest praise:

D'ací que quan marxem de les obres en què el fil argumental es troba a primer pla (com és el cas de les dues que acabo d'esmentar, però d'alguna manera en són partícips força fragments de la seva darrera etapa), quan trobem textos, d'altra banda magistrals, per al meu gust els millors, que ens parlen per si mateixos al marge dels arguments, és on podem trobar una densitat filosòfica major, poblada de visions al·lucinades, on l'autora reflecteix una vegada i altra la seva concepció del món i de la vida. (Aritzeta 1987: 48)

Encomiastic comments such as the above signal that these novels have been read locally as key components in Rodoreda's overall production, as the veritable holders of the kernel of her literary project, a tendency generally absent from Anglo-American idioms, where their import seems to be minimised, even effaced, as was the case with Pérez and Ihrle's feminist encyclopaedia. The implicit undercurrent to this critical pattern is an understanding of these novels as dissonant chords within

Rodoreda's trajectory, conceptually and ideologically disengaged from her more easily defined (or definable), earlier novels. Thus, a clear-cut line is drawn between her so-called realistic period (best exemplified by *La plaça...* and *El carrer...*) and her symbolic one (to which *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera* distinctly belong), together with a transitional hotchpotch where the intervening works (mainly *La meva Cristina i altres contes* and *Mirall trencat*) are usually cast. This linear classification, promulgated by Carme Arnau in her analysis of *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera* as exemplifying "l'altra banda del mirall" (Arнау 1990: 11) in Rodoreda's opus, is steadily reinforced by the understated yet divisionary critical strategies of Anglo-American criticism. However, its validity, and indeed, its veracity, have been contested by a number of Catalunya-based critics, often by engaging in direct dialogue with it (Casals i Couturier 1991) and exploring a series of biographical details that counteract it (Ibarz 1991). For this purpose, the importance of the fact that such seemingly disparate works as *La plaça del Diamant* and *La mort i la primavera* were begun almost simultaneously (and in fact submitted to the *premi Sant Jordi* in the years 1960 and 1961 respectively) is usually emphasised. What is more, after a well-known prolonged period of material hardship, emotional affliction, and psychosomatic creative paralysis, Rodoreda resumes her writing and enters a moment of full ebullition. The words of Mercè Ibarz below make reference to a biographical condition that is generally sidestepped in Anglo-American studies:

En aquests anys, doncs, havia passejat per Ginebra tres obres distintes i, tot i així, coetànies: una novel·la parlada, explicada pel monòleg d'un personatge (*La plaça del Diamant*) en un ambient menestral; una novel·la coral en tercera persona, la història polièdrica d'una casa burgesa (*Mirall trencat*), i una novel·la d'imaginació surrealista sobre una comunitat sencera, un poblet d'una societat primitiva (*La Mort i la Primavera*). Si hi afegim l'antecedent *Jardí vora el mar*, van ser quatre les novel·les gestades al mateix temps. (Ibarz 1991: 84)

Mercè Ibarz further intimates the contingency of the almost metonymic association between Rodoreda and her first widely acclaimed book, *La plaça del Diamant*, which critics would use as a primary point of reference since its publication 1962. The fact that she wrote *La plaça...* and *La mort...* in tandem dampens those hypotheses that grant ideological and stylistic exclusivity to the first. Moreover, as Ibarz points out,

Joan Sales' editorial direction was fundamental in the strategic foregrounding of *La plaça...* As a novel whose multi-layeredness may challenge both the ingenuous or untrained reader and the literary expert, *La plaça del Diamant* became an immediate seller. *La mort...*, by contrast, was a self-enclosed, hermetic literary creation, permeated by an unsparing symbolism. The fact that Joan Sales delayed its publication throughout his lifetime and provided little encouragement to the writer when she intermittently resolved to rework it, may partly explain the seemingly peripheral status, understood mainly in temporal terms, that the novel has in Rodoreda's oeuvre as a whole. However, this was a novel to which Rodoreda devoted unflinching efforts and dedication for more than twenty years. In an eloquent reversal of historical factuality, Ibarz conjectures on how the vectors sustaining Rodoreda's critical appraisal would be dramatically different today, had the publication of *La mort...* not been persistently deferred by her editor:

En aquests anys de 1959 a 1961, el punt interessant és que la represa literària de Mercè Rodoreda podia prendre dos camins no tan sols diferents, sinó francament oposats. Hauria pogut ser des d'aleshores la Rodoreda de *La Mort i la Primavera*, i la seva trajectòria des del punt de vista de l'acceptació dels lectors hauria estat potser la contrària de la que va engegar *La plaça del Diamant...* (Ibarz 1991: 85)

This bio-bibliographical detail seems to indicate that the verifiable critical neglect of novels such as *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera* in the Anglo-American milieu cannot be attributed to the possibility that they are secondary or nonessential marks in the continuum of Rodoreda's trajectory. Such contention can be disproved, as we have seen, both by *La plaça...* and *La mort...*'s synchronous genesis and Catalan scholarship's hailing of these later novels as real touchstones in Catalan letters. A rather more sustainable thesis is, as has been elsewhere noted, that not lending themselves to a straightforward gender-marked legibility, these novels have been progressively cast aside by critics who support an overall feminist agenda to Rodoreda's narrative. Concomitantly, the perception is effectively spread that Rodoreda's later works constitute a segregated creative block, far removed from the forms and motifs informing her deservedly (it is implied) more studied early works.

I will now put forward an approximation to the style of *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera*, filtered through the youth Adrià Guinart and an unnamed male narrative voice respectively, as, in fact, revealingly close to that of the more



realistic works *La plaça del Diamant* and *El carrer de les Camèlies*, where the female narrators can be more easily sited within the spatio-temporal backdrop of a post-War Barcelona, for most of their story line. The stylistic patterns outlined here will come into full view in the course of next chapter. For reasons of space, I will limit myself here to the narrative strategies that feature most prominently in all four works, thus suggesting the conjoining existence of an overriding stylistic intentionality which brings them close together, significantly closer, I submit, than most critics have admitted up to now. I am fully aware that an exhaustive exploration of these shared patterns would require a much ampler space than the one I am about to devote to them. This space is, however, circumscribed by the fact that what I aim to demonstrate is not this formal link per se, but that the widespread gender-centred critical gaze usually directed at Rodoreda's opus has tended to overemphasise the division between her early and late work (in terms of publication dates) through a consistent focus on the more superficial dissimilarities between them (female vs. male narrative agency, well-defined locale vs. symbolic space), and a subsequent downplaying of their analogies. The parameters of my exposition are thus not critical, but metacritical.

I will term the above-mentioned 'overriding stylistic intentionality' tentatively as 'the voice of the outcast' and suggest it lies at the epicentre of Rodoreda's literary project. This voice is inherent to a chronically marginalised narrative stance, a voice almost by definition jostled out of the central loci of signification. As a result, it is fragmentary, precarious, non-instrumental; it is not cathartic, introspective, expressive, but glides unaware of itself past the sites of self-revelation, judgement, and cognition. Thematically, it lacks informative essence, subsisting on sensations and unprocessed perceptions. Structurally, it lacks a sub-structure, getting entangled in anacolutha, lacunae, and non-sequiturs. It is not difficult to see why critics have often established a conjunctural connection between this type of discourse and the female protagonists' narratorial stance, thus emphasising the equation between womanhood and isolation. Since its inception, feminist Rodoredian scholarship has explored language in her female-narrated novels as exemplarily redolent of a typically female, disjointed subjectivity, whereby emblematic protagonists such as

Natàlia or Cecília strive to forge a cohesive identity for themselves. Critics such as Frances Wyers (1983: 305), Neus Carbonell (1995: 87), Geraldine Nichols (1986: 407) or, more recently, Kathryn A. Everly, have situated their studies under this axis. As Everly does in her own prefatory remarks:

In an effort to get away from what is becoming something of an annoying skip on the soundtrack of feminist theory, current studies have tried to explore the idea of the complicated construction of the gendered subject. Instead of locating the speaking subject in a concrete culturally defined position, the feminine voice has emerged in contemporary theory as being located outside of culture, outside of society, outside of what is perceived as "normal". Thus, the idea of women living in everyday exile from language, from expression, from true appreciation as human beings comes to represent what the women in this study [Rodoreda, Remedios Varo, Montserrat Roig, Carme Riera] seek to remedy. (Everly 2003: 9)

To study the works of Mercè Rodoreda in the light of the womanhood-isolation correlation is to bring them under the aegis of a by now well-established critical tradition in international feminist scholarship. The examination of the many discursive anxieties inflecting upon a woman's act of locution has been the thrust of some of the most consequential studies coming from feminist literary criticism up to date. Among these, the monumental *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, is a case in point, but also a large number of studies where a detectable link is put forward between textual tensions and the peripherality of a female consciousness, not to mention that this link is also the fulcrum of much French feminist theory developing since the 1960s. By accentuating the pertinence of Rodoreda's opus for this pivotal feminist thesis, her work is not simply made meaningful, but canonical, within the feminist intertext. Critics' neglect for her later works needs to be understood as a by-product of the widespread view, in my opinion a somewhat cosmetic one, that works such as *Quanta, quanta guerra...* and *La mort i la primavera* are of little import for a feminist critical project. They are however essential for an understanding of Rodoreda's literary project, apprehended holistically.

As will be fleshed out in the course of next chapter, one of the most prominent stylistic traits in Rodoreda's first-person narratives is the narrators' conspicuous lack of verbal economy, a feature amply documented in stylistic approaches to her work, invariably focusing on *La plaça...* and *El carrer...* (Glenn 1986: 66; Nance 1991:

86). Passages of a pronounced repetitive resonance with an almost negligible informative value abound not only in these novels, but also in the later ones, where the narrator, invariably an educationally unprivileged one, gets entangled in circuitous descriptions of their surrounding reality. Syntactically, there is scarcely any use of anaphoric devices or recapitulatory turns of phrase, and the narration thus flows unchecked, sometimes not even trammelled by minimal signs of punctuation. The following are selected extracts taken from Rodoreda's four main first-person narratives, where this stylistic feature can be identified:

La cuina era al costat del menjador i també donava a la galeria i damunt dels fogons hi havia **una campana de xemeneia de cuina antiga i aquesta campana de xemeneia de cuina antiga**, tot i que no la feien servir perquè guisaven amb gas, es veu que estava plena de **sutge** i quan estava a punt de ploure queien grumolls de **sutge** damunt dels fogons. (LPD: 417)

Va dir que era una bona nena, però que feia coses estranyes, i la monja li va preguntar quines coses estranyes feia, i ella li ho va dir tot; **que** jugava amb **foc**, **que** encenia papers en el fogó quan només hi quedava el caliu i **que** passejava el **foc** per tota la casa; **que** feia paperines amb paper d'escriure cartes i les ficava les unes a dintre de les altres i les feia cremar, i **que** de vegades calava **foc** a piles de diaris. (ECC: 28)

Em va venir un llampec de tristesa que em vaig espolsar de pressa. Ja trobaria tot el que necessitava i vaig seguir endavant amb els ulls mig clucs perquè **un sol més de color de rovell d'ou que el rovell d'ou** que m'havia begut m'enlluernava. Va ser tot badant amb el **sol** que vaig caure i em vaig fer **sang** al genoll. **La sang era vermella, més vermella que un clavell vermell**, més que la cresta desmaiada d'aquelles gallines daurades. (QQG: 82)

**El bosc era el bosc** on les persones grans **anaven** de tant en tant. I quan hi **anaven** ens tancaven a l'armari de fusta de la cuina i només podíem respirar per les **estrelles** dels batents que eren unes **estrelles** buides, com unes finestres que tinguessin forma d'**estrella**. (LMILP: 24)

Patterns of marked syntactic clumsiness are easy to detect in all four first-person narratives. The narrators tell of their environment in what could be described as an accumulative manner, concatenating detail after detail, yet with a defective sense of interlocking. That their minds cannot apprehend the causality underlying the facts depicted can be seen in the almost absolute absence of syntactical interconnection characterising their discourse, which unfurls in a somewhat ellipse-like fashion, that is, cyclically around semantical foci. The fact that these foci are usually not anaphorically substituted but incessantly repeated by the narrators, gives the measure

of their nodal significance within their psyches. Thus, the “campana de xemeneia de cuina antiga”, a sign of wealth and class status for working-class Natàlia, “el foc” for self-destructive Cecília, “la sang vermella” for Adrià Guinart, or “el bosc”, the site for the ultimate ritual in the world of the innominate narrator in *La mort...*, are all of essential relevance for an understanding of the protagonists’ universe.

This incapacity for inward-looking reflection brings us to a further discursive feature that finds a remarkable continuity in Rodoreda’s first-person narratives, namely her characters’ ruminative dwelling on sensorial perceptions. The textual weight granted to this mode of description is, again, symptomatic of the narrators’ estrangement from themselves and from a more mechanical understanding of their surroundings. By persisting on the surface of things, these characters tacitly express their isolated status, trapped as they are between an introspection they cannot articulate and an outer habitat, governed by principles and maxims they cannot fully decipher, let alone modify. Let us thus examine the following four examples, where the narrators’ fixation with exterior perceptions is carried over virtually unchanged from one novel to the next one:

I mentre pensava així van néixer **les olors i les pudors**. Totes. Empaitant-se, fent-se lloc i fugint i tornant: l’olor de terrat amb coloms i l’olor de terrat sense coloms i la pudor de lleixiu que quan vaig ser casada vaig saber quina mena de pudor era. I l’olor de sang que ja era com un anunci d’olor de mort. I l’olor de sofre dels coets i de les piules aquella vegada a la plaça del Diamant i l’olor de paper de les flors de paper i olor de sec de l’esparraguera que s’esmicolava i feia un gruix a terra de coses petites petites que eren el verd que havia fugit de la branca. (LPD: 520)

Encara recordo aquella tarda, quan el sol es ponía, en comptes de regar, el senyor Jaume em va fer posar un vestit net i vam anar a comprar plantes a casa del jardiner. Ens vam quedar aturats a mirar l’aparador: hi havia **roses amb una banda de fulla de color de carbassa i amb l’altra banda d’un groc de ginesta. Roses amb el dintre fosc i el fora clar. N’hi havia de nanes, totes poncelles per obrir, i roses de molsa d’un color de rosa entre rosa i lila. N’hi havia una de vermella, sola i de les més vermelles, amb quatre gotes d’aigua per les fulles, com si plorés. [...]** Moltes nits, quan feia bo, sortia al jardí a esperar la matinada. **Pel rosa.** (ECC: 24-25)

Això és el que hauria hagut de fer amb tu en comptes d’escoltar el teu neveu neveu. Tu, que tenies tot el temps per fer-la esperar, amb l’alegria de viure, **amb el gust de la poma i de la pera, la magrana reial corona de reina quan li cau la fulla arrissada i li surt la corona que tanca la capsula verda dura rodona plena de brillants vermells com la sang quan et talles i te’n surt una gota de foc com un gra de magrana amb el pinyol de fusta del color dels teus llavis, no el pinyol, sinó les fulles de la flor perseguides pel vent per deixar que rumbegi la corona tendra, això,**

que rumbegi la corona tendra tu que has volgut morir per l'aigua amb una papallona groga clavada als cabells. (QQG: 116)

El foc les feia cridar: cridaven baixet i xiulaven més baix encara i feien **fum blau**. I **l'olor de fulla cremada omplia les cases i l'aire. Tot l'aire era ple d'olor d'acabament**. Si cremaven poc, amb un bastó burxàvem la pila i l'aixecàvem enlaire d'un costat perquè la flama es fes més alta. I de mica en mica la primavera moria a la tardor damunt de les pedres rodones de la Plaça. Aviat la pluja que venia petita apagava els darrers calius i despintava les cases. **Tot el color rosa lliscava en regalims negres. El poble era un altre poble sense les fulles i sense el color.** (LMILP: 80)

Whilst the sensorial charge in all four extracts above has an almost tangible presence, a progressive line is also detectable as to its degree of intensity, visibly more powerful in the later works. This increment in the narrator's fixation with what s/he can perceive through the senses can also be discerned within the novels themselves. As adversity and isolation become more and more exacerbated, instigated in these novels most commonly by increasing material dearth, violence, or pronounced social ostracism, Rodoredian heroes and heroines tend to dwell persistently on an almost primitive recognition of their surroundings. Their level of awareness seems to wane, until a purely sensorial state of consciousness is reached, whereby solely the most fundamental stimuli are registered. The descriptive import of such passages acquires an unaffected mien, almost austere, which, although verging on the hallucinatory, also shows a most lucid side. Such a discursive mode lies at the very core of Rodoreda's much-cited intention stylistically, famously articulated in her prologue to *Mirall Trencat*, to come near to the almost imperceptible, minuscule modulations of the world around us, "els espasmes lentíssims d'un brot quan surt de la branca, la violència amb què una planta expulsa la llavor, la immobilitat salvatge dels cavalls de Paolo Ucello" (Rodoreda 1974: 13-14). Although the narrators' dwelling on the detailed description of sensorial perceptions, and thus Rodoreda's stylistic endeavour to say "amb la màxima simplicitat les coses essencials" (Rodoreda 1974: 14), has been more often than not studied as a characteristic of her earlier, so-called realistic novels by Anglo-American commentators, it is a distinguishable strategy also present in her later works. Her opus is thus endowed with a stylistic continuity in this regard, a thesis which would call for special critical commentary, understood within more

holistic and organic parameters (which has been rarely granted by Anglo-American scholarship because of the widespread neglect of her later works).

By focusing on the female protagonists of Rodoreda's works, a more inclusive reading is sidestepped as to the conjoining analogies detectable across Rodoreda's characters. Her undeniable inclination towards female protagonists can be said to stand in hyponymic relationship to the superordinate category of the marginalised subject, where (inadequate) infants or social rejects such as Adrià Guinart and the narrator in *La mort...* can also be accommodated. The stylistic trends sketched in this section, together with certain others which will be more lengthily studied later on, are visibly present in all four works and synergetically give shape to the voice of the displaced Rodoredian character, a locutionary entity which oscillates between the unwary or the plain dissociated, the barely conscious and the hallucinatory, inhabiting a world (be it the realistically localisable Barcelona in *La plaça...* or the disquietingly graphic atopia in *La mort...*) which they will never fully fathom.<sup>3</sup> Careful stylistic consideration of Rodoreda's later novels, a ground for study that has remained virtually unexplored, would assist in the articulation of a more far-reaching Anglo-American reception of the author and, as a result, partly resolve the long-term problem of Catalan and Anglo-American scholarship's mutual estrangement

### 1.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to cover a wide range of critical works on the Catalan author Mercè Rodoreda with a view to formulating a metacritical approximation to

---

<sup>3</sup> Janet Pérez has penned a curious attempt to situate the symbolic world created by Rodoreda in *La mort...* within recognisable spatio-temporal coordinates. After suggesting that a series of fictional clues may lead us to believe that the society depicted belongs in a post-Neolithic, or even a post-Renaissance context (Pérez 1991: 181), she moves on to locate the village tentatively "almost anywhere in the Catalan Pyrenees" (ibid: 183) and to identify certain analogies with a problematically mythicised conception of the Spanish countryside. Her words are worth reproducing in full: "Save for the addition of the enigmatic clock, little appears to have changed in the village and surrounding area in the last three thousand years. Thus, Rodoreda underscores the incredible primitivism of life in Spain's isolated villages in the second half of the Twentieth Century –villages where, even after the Civil War, sowing and reaping were done with the methods described in the Bible, threshing wheat with donkeys' hooves and winnowing the grain by tossing it in the air. One has only to see the Roman bridges and roads still in use in Spain today to realize that in many remote rural areas of the country, progress is not a meaningful

her scholarly reception. My main aim has been to evince the divisional line between scholarly work produced in Catalunya, on the one hand, and in Anglo-American circles, on the other, as well as a series of key areas of malaise emerging in both of them. These include Catalan criticism's pronouncedly self-enclosed lines of enquiry, premised on the occasional acknowledgement, yet patchy assimilation of the postulates advanced by Anglo-American analyses, or the discernible tendency across Catalunya-based publications to (over)emphasise the tutelary leverage of a male figure behind Rodoreda's creative talent. On the Anglo-American side, a central line of research has been solidly established that fastens upon gender-marked appraisals of the original opus. This yields, as we have seen, a repetitive critical coverage of mostly the women-centred, first-person novels and short stories. By the same token, occasional studies are carried out which attempt to formulate a feminist reading of her later works. These are, however, significantly less in number and conceptually less persuasive, the general trend being, largely, to disregard those novels.

Anglo-American reception of Mercè Rodoreda supports itself on a further baluster. The three translations into English available, namely *The Time of the Doves* (1981), *My Christina and Other Stories* (1984) and *Camellia Street* (1993), all published by the non-profit publishing house Graywolf Press, bear witness to the indisputable status that the author has enjoyed in the Anglophone academic market. A brief communication with Graywolf Press provided me with some details about these publications. In their own words: "*Time of the Doves* is by far the most popular of the three. The sales figures are as follows: *My Christina*..., 1000 units net; *The Time of the Doves*, 6000 units net; *Camellia Street*, 2000 units net. *The Time of the Doves* still sells for us primarily in the academic market. *Camellia Street* is now out-of-print".

American translator David Rosenthal stands as the sole mediator between the Catalan originals and the translated texts; his translated output has not been held under scrutiny, save in Andreu-Besó's article and my own previous work, where *The Time of the Doves* is brought into comparison with the other existing translation, *The Pigeon Girl* (1967), today largely unacknowledged (Andreu-Besó 1999; Miguélez-

---

concept, and the passage of time is, indeed, not historical but merely a biological event, as

Carballeira 2003). The general consensus is that his “several fine translations” (Pérez 2002: 125) operate in both temporal and conceptual synchrony with academic work to give the Anglophone reader a measured understanding of the Catalan figure and work.

In the following chapter I will try to show that Rosenthal’s translations are both in and out of sync with Anglo-American Rodoredian scholarship. As regards the always ineluctable process of selection underlying the first stages of the translational activity, Rosenthal’s project serves a gender-centred purpose. To date, only those three works which have most saliently been appraised from a feminist stance are available in translation. However, when the textual material is carefully analysed, a number of sites of conflict arise as to Rosenthal’s translations’ true service to the feminist literary cause. This detection serves as a testimony to the unevenness and veiled patchiness characterising the paths of reception in hand, an interesting phenomenon for whose exploration the interstitial combination of metacriticism and translation studies provides a most serviceable tool.

---

Rodoreda depicts it” (ibid: 182).



## Chapter 2: Mercè Rodoreda in Translation: Sides and Undersides of David Rosenthal's Translational Project

With regard to this chapter's scope, a number of pointers have already been offered. Anglo-American scholarly research on Mercè Rodoreda, itself a central piece in the puzzle of her international reception, has fallen mainly within the purview of gender-minded critics. The translations today available of her works have been largely validated by these critics, who frequently acknowledge and draw upon them in their studies without dissention (Rhodes 1994; Rueda 1994). It should be noted in this respect that conversant familiarity with Catalan should not be expected from Anglo-American critics across the board. Some scholars will resort to the Spanish translations in the first instance, a necessary recourse inferable from their reference to the Spanish texts in their bibliographies (Everly 2003: 226). In a personal communication, critic Kathryn Everly has informed me that she first read Rodoreda's novels in Spanish as leisurely reading, and later turned to the Catalan originals for the purposes of research. The Spanish translations were of assistance to her, also, when translating significant excerpts from Catalan into English. Other critics will use the Spanish translations in their quotations (Ball 1992), a significant critical slippage that attests to the waning, yet still traceable condescension with which Rodoreda has occasionally been approached as a Catalan writer.<sup>4</sup> At times, a lack of familiarity with the Catalan language is also manifest in the impromptu translations offered by critics in their studies. In her 1994 article 'The Roots of Alienation: Rodoreda's *Viatges i flors*', for instance, Rodoreda expert Nancy Vosburg wrongly translates the title "*Viatges a uns quants pobles*" as "Travels Among the People" (Vosburg 1994: 148). It is therefore not surprising that Rosenthal's translations have been by and large a welcome advance in the field, and that they have not been significantly scrutinised by these critics, partly because the task would require a training that some

do not possess, but partly also because, as will become clearer by the end of this chapter, translations are often received and handled as working tools, usually sparking off the critic's interest in the original or assisting him/her in research. Only rarely are they taken by literary critics as objects of study in themselves, with a capacity to instigate and contribute to scholarly dialogue. Of course, this is not the case within the field of Translation Studies proper, where translations and the intricacies distinctive of the translational movement are the pivots of scholarly analysis. However, the fact that so very little attention has been granted to translations outside this discipline bears witness to the menial status of translations as true objects of study still currently observable. This chapter attempts to show that the translational movement of Rodoreda into English is not as piecemeal as Rodoredian critics' use of the English texts seems to suggest. Its aim is an outline of the contrasting strategies implemented at both the structural and at the textual level in the translations, with a view to disclosing the conflict between critical parlance on the author and its translational refractions. Before I turn to the elucidation of these conceptual frictions, a brief résumé of the translator's identity is in order.

David H. Rosenthal has been the main mediator between Rodoreda's work and the Anglophone readership. His translations, *The Time of the Doves* (1981), *My Christina and Other Stories* (1984), and *Camellia Street* (1993), were published in the span of twelve years, therefore accompanying the increasing international interest in the work and biography of the Catalan author. His lifelong commitment to the spread of Catalan culture and literature has taken shape in the form of numerous publications such as his translation of the seminal fifteenth-Century Catalan novel *Tirant lo blanc* (1468, 1985) or of the Majorcan philosopher Ramon Llull's *Llibre de les bèsties* (1288) as *The Book of the Beasts* (1990), as well as his volume *Modern Catalan Poetry: An Anthology* (1991), a compilation of translations of some of the most significant post-war Catalan poets. Also committed to the diffusion of Catalan 20<sup>th</sup>-Century literature is his translation of Víctor Català's *Solitud* (1905) as *Solitude* (1992). His translations of Rodoreda are a central part of his project. In his competence as translator qua acculturator, Rosenthal invariably accompanies his

---

<sup>4</sup> Fortunately, centralist manoeuvres such as José Ortega's reference to Rodoreda as an

texts with prefatory commentary. His forewords, even if somewhat perfunctory and repetitive (there are several paragraphs that are common to all of them) constitute helpful introductions to many key issues in Rodoreda's fictional world and textuality. Above all, they aim to introduce the prospective reader to the political past and present of Catalunya, as well as to the sociolinguistic situation of the Catalan language, in the hope that a keener rapport between the Anglophone audience and the source culture and literature will ensue. The following words are repeated as a concluding remark in all three forewords to his translations of Rodoreda:

Thanks to authors such as Rodoreda and the poets J. V. Foix, Salvador Espriu, and Vicent Andrés Estellés, Catalan literature has remained as vital as ever. One hopes that these writers, who have spoken so eloquently for and to the nation, will now begin to receive the recognition they deserve in the United States. (Rosenthal 1980: 11; 1984: xii; 1993: xx).

The fact that this observation, among certain others, is, however, taken over unchanged from one introduction to the other, betrays a rather contradictory approach to his call for a dynamisation of international dialogue around Catalan letters. His eminent position as an intermediary between both extremes of the transcultural movement is thus somewhat marred, at a very first glance, by the slightly unenterprising, repetitive format of his introductory words, only detectable after a cross-analysis of his forewords. In what ensues, I will turn to an examination of a set of possibly more wide-ranging modulations effected in his translations.

## **2.1 Structural Re-arrangements: Selection, Chronology, and Paratext**

Examined as a whole, the translations into English of Rodoreda's works available today predictably bespeak a selective bias. The titles accessible to the English-speaking reader are the ones that have attracted most scholarly attention, an affirmation which is tantamount to saying, given the predominant critical trend explored in the previous chapter, that only those works that have been extensively studied as relevant to feminist theory have made their way into the Anglo-American market. The instigator of this to-date unchanged state of affairs is difficult to locate.

---

"escritora española en lengua catalana" (Ortega 1983: 71) are today a rare sight.

While the references to Rosenthal's undertaking, even if often formulated in passing, seem to speak of his project as an eminently individual and self-directed one,<sup>5</sup> there is no reason to dismiss the possibility of outward instruction or commissioning also being imparted. The fact is almost irrefutable, though very seldom brought to full critical scrutiny, that individual translators alone cannot be held responsible for the entire mechanics of the translational movement. The elucidation of all impinging factors (from editorial guidance to the penning and concocting of paratextual material such as back-cover blurbs) is nonetheless virtually impracticable, among other reasons, because publishing houses are characteristically reluctant to supply this type of information. As a result, it has not been within my power to gather relevant data as to whether the exercise of selection underpinning Rosenthal's translations was mostly his own or else the result of a collective, concerted enterprise. Still, it is not superfluous to say that the selective process is nevertheless traceable, and conjecturably in accordance with the same selective drive detectable across Anglo-American Rodoredian scholarship. When studied in tandem, translations and critical work seem to constitute a lattice made up of mutually supportive relationships premised upon gender as their axis. Let us now turn to a chronological exposition of the translations.

When Rosenthal's *The Time of the Doves* appeared in 1981, it tacitly, yet irrevocably, cast a shadow on the already existing English translation of *La plaça del Diamant*, Eda O'Shiel's *The Pigeon Girl* (1967). Very little has been written ever since about this situation. In his article 'Linguistic and Cultural Insights in two English Translations of Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*' (1999), J. Vicent Andreu-Besó explores the possible reasons why the second translation came out, and suggests it was mainly to surmount the meagre impact that the previous English translation had had on the readership by actualising its rather formal tone, which, as he said, was perceived as "stiff and outdated" in America (Andreu-Besó 1999: 149). Rosenthal's text, it follows, was to be read as a result of the increasing academic interest in Rodoreda developing in the United States, and as an exercise of renewal

---

<sup>5</sup> Excerpts of an encomiastic review of *The Time of the Doves* by Rodoredian expert Joan Ramon Resina are available at <http://www.graywolfpress.org/academic/timedoves.html> (accessed on 06/05/2004).

encompassing the most innovative insights and interpretations emerging to prominence at the time. This inference is buttressed by the widespread notion that re-translations are generally more apt and satisfactory than their predecessors, better attuned to the enveloping episteme. To put it in Susam-Sarajeva's phraseology:

For the majority of translation scholars, retranslations are things that come up as time passes and succeed the previous translation(s) in linear fashion. [...] In accordance with a history-as-progress model, [...] retranslations will be, in one way or the other, 'better' than the previous translations. [...] The main assumption behind the former is that (re)translations try to restore something back to the source text –something lost in previous attempts. This argument is especially strong in the writings of those who believe that initial translations are mostly assimilative and tend to reduce the 'otherness' of the source text because of local constraints. (Susam-Sarajeva 2002: 163-164)

Eda O'Shiel's translation has been in practical terms totally superseded by Rosenthal's. Today, it is unavailable for immediate sale and totally absent from catalogues. Its almost total invisibility is also aggravated by the fact that there is no mention of the existence of this translation in David Rosenthal's foreword to his version, possibly a commercially minded strategy that decisively contributed to the burial of the former, as the unknowing reader will approach the 1981-translation as an absolute point of reference. The current state of affairs does not mean, however, that Eda O'Shiel's translation is today devoid of value. *The Pigeon Girl* holds the outstanding merit of providing a heedful rendering of Rodoreda's textuality at a time when no critical insight on the author was being produced internationally. In this sense O'Shiel's translation constitutes a remarkable example of an acutely aware individual's work, as there are numerous instances in the text of O'Shiel's audacity, not only as a dexterous translator but also as an alert reader and critic of Rodoreda's literary project.

The second translation by David Rosenthal was *My Christina and Other Stories* (1984), a collection of seventeen short stories that had originally come out after *El carrer de les Camèlies* in its original Catalan form.<sup>6</sup> The issue of order comes into play within the short-story collection *My Christina...* itself, as the layout of the tales has been rearranged. As Elizabeth Rhodes also noted, the tale "The Salamander" is

---

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of the German edition of *La meva Cristina...*, where tales extracted from the collection *Vint-i-dos contes* are also included, see van Lawick 1998.

foregrounded in the English translation of the collection by moving it to the first position (it was, in fact, the antepenultimate story in the original compilation). Rhodes accounts for this modification as a strategic shift aimed at spotlighting in translation a short story that had already been repeatedly eulogised by the critics and held dear by the author (Rhodes 1994: 167). This movement, however, has implications that go beyond the mere accentuation of the tale's irrefutable worth. "La salamandra" in many ways epitomises the Rodoredian literary project as it has been widely perceived by Anglo-American critics. For one thing, it is a first-person monologue springing from a female narrator. Further, the narrator is a woman who will be put through a severe process of social ostracism as a result of a series of events that she cannot control or avoid, catalysed by a rarefied sexual encounter with a married man. In a state of inexorable isolation, this woman's referential world goes from being outwardly objectifiable to increasingly unreliable and supernatural. The situation reaches its nadir when the female subject, while burning at the stake, loses all sense of corporeality and self-awareness and becomes something else: a salamander. Rosenthal's placing of "The Salamander" first in the collection of stories thus gives preponderance to this tale above others, not only because it can be read as the quintessential amalgamation of typically Rodoredian creative concerns, but because its feminist value as a fable of female servitude and teetering social status is concomitantly foregrounded. Simultaneously, this re-ordering precipitates a kind of thematic nexus with the tale "The Letter" which was only tenuous in the original. As another female first-person narrative where the narrator feels she has turned into a sorceress after her husband's death, "The Letter" offers again a compacted personal log of ostracism and increasing psychological dissociation. These two tales, "The Salamander" and "The Letter", create, when read almost in succession, an imprint on the readers as to Rodoreda's primary concern with female subjects in isolation, a clear repercussion that seems to be the aim underlying Rosenthal's rearrangement of the story order in his *My Christina and Other Stories*. On a larger scale, it needs to be noted, this alteration on the macrolevel, seems in tune with the overall selective thrust of the whole of Rosenthal's translational project, namely, to reinforce the opinion substantiated by Anglo-American criticism that Rodoreda's literary

production is primarily constructed around female experience. His forewords, however, do not draw attention to the translational process as such or to the translator's own choices and modifications upon the original. The absence of any explanatory commentary regarding this meaningful structural change diverts attention away from this type of refashioning in general and relegates any analysis by the critic to the realm of bold conjecture.

Rosenthal's last translation was *Camellia Street*, published in 1993 after his death. This publication came to confirm the today deep-seated path of reception of Rodoreda's work in English. At a time when the whole of Rodoreda's novelistic production had been published and her abandonment of the early woman-oriented narratives was widely admitted within local critical circles, the translation of another of her exile-period realist, female-centred novels was to confirm that the choice of Rodoreda's books translated into English was visibly informed by an intention to portray her as a feminist writer. What could until then be considered an incipient project of diffusion with a prospective amplification of its initial direction, was now sanctioned by the 1993 publication, the last one to date, as a finely demarcated translational scheme. Beyond the selective value attached to this translation, a further paratextual directive deserves comment. The edition of *Camellia Street* in 1993 by Graywolf Press includes not only the accustomed introduction by David Rosenthal but also a personal foreword by the Chicana writer Sandra Cisneros. In some seven pages of an almost diary-like writing format, Cisneros tells of her trip to Barcelona in the search of the emblematic spaces depicted in Rodoreda's novels. Disappointed at how time and progress had drastically changed the appearance of the *carrer de les Camèlies* or of the *plaça del Diamant* as may have been remembered by Rodoreda while in exile, a dismay exemplified in her cutting opening remark "There are no camellias on Camellia Street" (Cisneros 1993: vii), she speculates about the writer's identity in a somewhat superficial way:

Was she married? Did she have children? Did her husband want her to follow her life of letters, or did he say, "Mercè, enough of that, come to bed already"? And when she went to bed, did she wish he wasn't there so she could go to bed with a book? I don't know for certain, but I wonder. (Cisneros 1993: viii)

Cisneros's foreword does not significantly contribute to the reader's knowledge and understanding of Rodoreda's work. On the contrary, her piece reconstructs an *ad hoc* image of the author, made up of brief informational patches and a considerable amount of mythicising speculation and marvelled guessing:

Did she mop bathrooms and tug bed linens taut, type doctoral dissertations, wipe the milk moustache from the mouth of a small child, embroider blue stars on sheets and pillow-cases? Or work all day in a bakery like Colometa, the protagonist of *The Time of the Doves*, her fingers tired from tying ribbons into bows all day? I can't know. (Cisneros 1993: viii-ix)

Cisneros also dwells on personal experience, on the bewilderment felt when discovering Rodoreda's novels for the first time (a milestone in her literary career brought about, she assures us, by a parking-lot attendant's reading tip) and on the personal gratification of delving into her novels. Above all, however, the insertion of Cisneros's foreword is of decisive importance for the Anglophone reader's reception of Rodoreda's novel. As a writer with a manifestly feminist agenda, as well as an established literary stature among critics and scholars, Cisneros's words gravely resonate with inklings of a transatlantic ideological encounter that is significantly compounded by their shared experiential ground of exile, their cultural and linguistic in-betweenness. This connection has been addressed in an article by Mary S. Pollock, where both authors are seen as occupying "multiple frontiers –between conflicting cultural and political bodies and between levels of consciousness" (Pollock 1998: 88). In this light, their works, or better, the conceptual intersection of their works, articulated by the editorial combination of foreword and translation, furnishes the reader with an interpretative guideline as to the original author's political intent. Again, the notion that Rodoreda's work is of intrinsic appeal to the feminist reader underlies the editorial paraphernalia sustaining her English translations.

The image of Mercè Rodoreda that has been reinforced and maintained by her translations into English is, as an analysis of the project's structural façade has disclosed, in accordance with gender-centred scholarly figurations. The selective agenda underlying it, which means that only those works with a readily recognisable woman-defined value have been made available, the meaningful change in the order of the stories of *My Christina...* with its foregrounding of "The Salamander", and the inclusion of Cisneros's imprimatur in the edition on *Camellia Street*, all indicate the



degree to which the translations are attuned to the findings and interpretations today established by Anglo-American critical work on Rodoreda. Thus intertwined, scholarly work and translations stand in a relationship of mutual affirmation and corroboration that has not to date been significantly queried. In the following section, I will attempt to demonstrate that this seemingly robust organic superstructure rests in fact on a more ramshackle framework, something that comes to light when examining the textual façade of the translations.

## 2.2 Textual Figurations: Transatlantic Echoes of a Woman's Voice

A closer analysis of Rosenthal's introductions to his translations reveals him as an apt interpreter of the originals' textual semantics and cadences. In his introduction to *The Time of the Doves* he devotes some space to stylistic commentary and delineates a tentative link between form and female consciousness, as he addresses the novel's "densely-packed detail", its repetitive character or the engrained muteness underlying Natàlia's seizing of words (Rosenthal 1981: 8). More importantly, he highlights the centrality of the gendered narrative voice when assessing the novel's historical value: "In a sense, *The Time of the Doves* is the story of most Spaniards during the 1930s and 1940s. But more profoundly, it explores what it feels like to be an ordinary woman in a Mediterranean country" (Rosenthal 1981: 8). In his foreword to *My Christina and Other Stories*, he briefly elaborates on Rodoreda's distinctive probing into her narrators' psyches in order to emerge with a highly nuanced style that mirrors the most puzzling ruminations. As he observes: "The author's primary ambiguity [...] grows out of her own 'negative capability'" (Rosenthal 1984: x). His mixing of the 'author' and 'narrator' entities notwithstanding, Rosenthal pithily singles out one of the most idiosyncratic features of Rodoreda's first-person narratives: the disconcerting lack of articulate judgement and self-knowledge that her characters profess. This he explains to the target reader in terms of cultural comparison:

Part of this ambiguity arises from the characters' lack of self-awareness. Though there is intense inner life (often projected onto external details), there is almost no communication or introspection as we think of them in the United States. Feelings,

even the most violent ones, tend to choke rather than educate, and Rodoreda's heroes and heroines are often victimized by their unspoken passions. (Rosenthal 1984: ix-x)

Similarly, although stylistic analysis does not feature prominently in his 1993 foreword, Rosenthal aptly identifies the most frequently studied aspects of *El carrer de les Camèlies* and of its emotionally fragile female narrator, namely her narcissistic drive (Rosenthal 1993: xvii) and her vain quest for a father figure (Rosenthal 1993: xviii), which suggests a familiarity with the literature on this work.

The prefatory accompaniment to his translations thus offers some insight into the originals' textual configurations and prepare the reader, mainly the North-American reader, for a more informed understanding of the work in hand. A detailed foray into his texts will shed light on the degree to which the aspects of the originals that were highlighted in his introductions have been given precedence in the translations. Because all the evidence gathered up to this point seems to indicate that the translations are attuned to a refraction of Rodoreda's work as women-oriented, the ensuing exposition is split into three sites for the characterisation of the typically Rodoredian female first-person narrator, namely their inability for self-articulation and subsequent expressive clumsiness, their obsessive focus on the world of objects and sensory detail, and their use of a noticeably infantilised speech. I will limit my textual analysis to the novels *La plaça del Diamant* and *El carrer de les Camèlies* and to their translations, and dispense with the short-story collection in this case, in order to maintain the focus on sustained characterisational devices as they are deployed in Rodoreda's extended first-person narratives.

### **2.2.1 Class and Education in Rodoreda's Women Narrators**

Several critics have talked about Rodoreda's uncompromising reaction to the early critical figurations of Natàlia in *La plaça del Diamant* as a witless woman. Patricia Hart, for instance, reproduces the repartee initiated by Catalan critic Baltasar Porcel and his definition of Natàlia as "una noia beneita" (Porcel in Hart 1994: 48). Rodoreda's riposte leaves no room for speculation as to her conception of the character: "considero més intel·ligent la Colometa que Madame Bovary o que Anna Karèнина, i a ningú se li ha acudit dir que fossin beneites" (Rodoreda in Hart 1994:

48). Marta Pessarrodona had as early as 1983 addressed this same issue, by speaking of this critical perception as damaging to the overall reception of Rodoreda's female characters (Pessarrodona 1983: 675-676). The underlying motif for this misprision, she suggests, is critics' failure to identify the importance of class substrate among Rodoreda's characterisational devices. As she pithily puts it:

“Ni hi ha fa res que, els anys seixanta, ens arribès l'evangeli segons Sant Lukacs, perquè sembla que ningú no s'ha parat a considerar la classe social dins la qual s'insereixen els personatges principals de la novel·la: una menestralia molt propera al proletariat actual, sense cap domini de la situació, i menys la històrica. Si crítics i comentaristes han oblidat aquest detall essencial, que fa modificar molt l'apreciació que podem tenir de la protagonista, l'autora no ho oblida en cap moment.” (Pessarrodona 1983: 676)

Since Pessarrodona's provocative call, few commentators have directly addressed the import of class in Rodoreda's more realistic characters, possibly with the exception of Michael Ugarte (1999). In general, while stylistic analyses of Rodoreda's first-person narratives abound, especially in the form of rounding-off commentary to more thematically oriented studies, sociolinguistic approaches are virtually non-existent. I believe, however, that discourse in novels such as *La plaça del Diamant* and *El carrer de les Camèlies* lends itself readily to this type of analysis, as the parameters of class and gender palpably shape its contents, forms, and registers.

The textual space in which social extraction becomes more noticeable in these novels is in its intersection with the narrators' educational background. Intrinsically intertwined, social stratification and educational attainment impinge on each other, an interaction which perpetuates the hierarchical cycle of social mobility. In the novels at hand, the female narrators' working-class background is nowhere more visible than in their anxieties over their acquired knowledge of their environment and in their need for self-reaffirmation through the insistent stating of what they know, can (and cannot) understand. In several passages throughout the novels, both Natàlia and Cecília speak about acquired knowledge as a means of integration into the community (Rodoreda 1962: 481; 1966: 23).

But it is language in these novels that functions as the most effective indicator of the female narrators' limited formal instruction. At the level immediately above the main narrative, that is, if we consider language as an entity separated from the story,

and therefore, from the story's (diegetic) narrator, language becomes a gauge with which the reader can calibrate the narrator's level of expressive competence. It is, thus, through language in these novels that we are made privy to the female narrators' limited means for linguistic functionality (including their ability for accuracy, relevance, or reliability). Language at this level of analysis functions as the main characterisation device, because what these female narrators say and how they say it stand as one of the main clues the reader has to the overall understanding of their universe and psyche. If we move into the diegetic level of analysis, that is, if we assess the value of language for the story's character-narrator, we find it has a further instrumental purpose. Language is, fictionally, the tool with which both Natàlia and Cecília inadvertently endeavour to understand. Trapped between two worlds they cannot coherently articulate by means of dialectic investigation or lucid introspection -the world of outer events largely orchestrated by men on the one hand, and their inner selves, on the other-, narrating for these women should be understood, as Kimberly Nance said, more as "a personal attempt to comprehend experience than an artistic attempt to communicate it" (Nance 1991: 68).

In what follows I will analyse *The Time of the Doves* and *Camellia Street* with a focus on how the low educational attainment of the female narrators, and therefore their modest social extraction, is relayed through language. A series of relevant tokens will be examined, touching on lexicality, orality, and folkloric content. It is to an examination of the first type that I now turn.

Recourse to a versatile and cultivated lexicon is undoubtedly a symptom of a cultured experiential range. In her exile-period, first-person female narratives, Rodoreda plays precisely on this variable and conjures up a lexically flat mode of speech. This does not mean that the narrators' discourse is wanting in versatility or vim (these features are, in fact, accomplished through other means), but that there is a calculated lack of lexical resourcefulness about their expression that gives the measure of their unassuming disposition and modest upbringing. It is with this consideration in mind that a faulty understanding of the character of Natàlia may arise, for instance, from the reading of terms such as "hydrochloric acid", Rosenthal's translation of the colloquial "salfumant" in the original (Rodoreda 1981: 147), or the

overly sophisticated “like I was a superhuman” for “com si jo no fos una persona” (Rosenthal 1981: 107). Further, a problematic contrast arises between the characterisational capacity of the translated text and critical formulations such as that of Albrecht and Lunn, who clearly state that “Natàlia’s vocabulary is very limited” (Albrecht and Lunn 1987: 61). The gulf thus breached will be, as we shall see, a potential snag to Rosenthal’s translations as they stand. Similarly, in *El carrer de les Camèlies*, examples of this type are also detectable, giving rise to significant crevices between the female character’s menial experiential scope and the at times overly polished idiom they seem to adopt in the translation. In the following examples, the lexical terms in the translation reflect a notable degree of expressive command on the part of Cecília, as well as a knowledgeable use of neologisms and technical words that fell outside the narrator’s range in the original:

#### EXAMPLE 1:

Tenien dues cosines que eren germanes bessones i encara que fossin una mica més enllà dels trenta anys eren conquistadores i presumides i tenien els colzes bonics. (ECC: 14)

They had two lady cousins who were identical twins, and even though they were a little over thirty they were both *femme fatales* and they had pretty elbows. (CS: 9, emphasis in the original)

#### EXAMPLE 2:

Jo remenava el sucre amb la cullereta i ell em mirava mig encantat. (ECC: 173)

I stirred the sugar with my spoon, and he stared at me, half-hypnotized. (CS: 175)

The translational choices ‘*femme fatales*’ and ‘half-hypnotized’ add nuance, even glamour, to a discourse that was originally conceived as unpretentious. The target reader’s perception of the narrator as an educationally naïve subject is thus jeopardised, and the vista of an eloquent and perspicacious one is transposed in its stead.

Also along the linguistic plane is the translations’ treatment of orality, a typically Rodoredian stylistic trait that is amply documented in the literature (Glenn 1986: 61;

Martí-Olivella 1987: 162; Resina 1987: 232; Carbonell 1994a: 27; 1994b: 58).

Both Natàlia and Cecília's narrations read, to put it in cinematic phraseology, as spontaneous voice-overs to their own mnemonic strip. As a result, the cadence of their expositions bears the hallmarks of an unchecked colloquialism, with an extensive use of idioms, interjections and onomatopoeias at the lexical level, and of typically oral syntactic constructions at the structural one. The following examples, centred on syntactic forms of orality, intend to show that the amply documented impromptu flavour created by these stylistic strategies is significantly put at risk in the translations, a tendency which is, it should be noted, more tangible in *La plaça del Diamant*.

#### EXAMPLE 3:

Em va deixar anar els braços, se'm va posar al costat altra vegada, **i avall**, fins que vam arribar a la Diagonal-Passeig de Gràcia. (LPD: 360)

Then he let go of my arms and started walking beside me again toward the centre of town till we got to the corner of Diagonal and Passeig de Gracia. (TD: 24)

#### EXAMPLE 4:

Vam dinar molt bé i en havent dinat van fer música amb discos i **tots a ballar**. (LPD: 377)

The meal was delicious, and when we'd finished they put on some records and everyone danced. (TD: 41).

#### EXAMPLE 5:

Amb l'Antoni adormit o plorant per terra, **vinga pintar**. (LPD: 401)

So I painted while Antoni slept or lay on the roof and cried. (TD: 68).

The constructions highlighted are instances of highly colloquial syntactical structures in Catalan. They are practically devoid of any semantic load, though it could be arguably maintained that they all attach a sense of drive, persistence or continuity to the actions they modify. They are, however, an unequivocal sign of spoken language (they reflect the typically oral use of syntactical ellipsis, characterised in speech by a

particular intonational pattern, with the nucleus being those very dummy elements) and, as was pointed out above, permeate the whole of Natàlia's narration. David Rosenthal's translations above show a tendency towards a more neutral register, where a large number of the original spoken-register indicators have been obliterated. Also notice his possible misreading of 'terra' (floor) as 'terrat' (roof) in example 5, hence the erroneous translation.

In tune with these typically colloquial syntactical structures is the feature of verbal ellipsis. Again, this is an essential component in the novels' overall sense of textual fluidity and of the readers' understanding of the female narrators' discourse as not only unpremeditated, but, at some points, crucially peremptory. Mercè Rodoreda's characterisation of her female characters' psyche as an entanglement of recollections, repressed emotions, and confused intuitions that all press to surface, comes across in her creation of a style where sentences relentlessly overlap and ideas summon one another in a communicative mode that falls short of clarity and focus. This is a stylistic contrivance for whose configuration verbal ellipsis is crucial.

The functionality of verbal ellipsis in *La plaça...* and *El carrer...* as both an indicator of orality and of the female narrators' nebulous exposition of their thoughts is frequently suppressed in David Rosenthal's translations, where he often practises the explicitation of the elements purposefully missing in the original. There is a concomitant rearrangement of the sentence syntax, as further verbal nuclei are inserted for communicative clarification. The following are but two representative examples of this tendency:

#### EXAMPLE 6:

L'entarmat dels músics estava voltat d'esperguera fent barana i l'esperguera estava guarnida amb flors de paper lligades amb filferro primet. I els músics suats i en mànigues de camisa. **La meva mare morta feia anys i sense poder-me aconsellar i el meu pare casat amb una altra.** El meu pare casat amb una altra i jo sense la meva mare que només vivia per tenir-me atencions. (LPD: 353-354)

There were asparagus plants around the bandstand to keep the crowd away, and the plants were decorated with the flowers tied together with tiny wires. And the musicians with their jackets off, sweating. **My mother had been dead for years and couldn't give me advice and my father had remarried.** My father remarried and me without my mother whose only joy in life had been to fuss over me. (TD: 16)

#### EXAMPLE 7:

Duia un medalló d'or i, al mig, petit, el retrat del cap d'un senyor amb els ulls grossos plens de negre i només amb una mica de blanc. (ECC: 42-43)

She was wearing a gold medallion and in the middle was a little man's head with big eyes **so full of black that only a speck of white was showing**. (CS: 39,)

Example 6 is often reproduced in critical studies, as it comprises a key aspect for the understanding of Natàlia as an isolated, deserted individual (Carbonell 1994: 19). Her reiterative references to the death of her mother and to the fact that her father had remarried, is eloquent of her perception of herself as defenceless and vulnerable. Faced with the invasive resoluteness of the stranger who is going to become her husband, Natàlia feels she lacks the kind of supportive background that an enduring bond with her mother would have provided. As a consequence, she feels companionless and unguarded, entirely at the mercy of the strong-willed. A pervasive feeling of anxiety is thus conveyed by the repetition of the phrases “la meva mare morta” and “el meu pare casat amb una altra”, textually imbricated through the noticeable absence of verbs. This lack of verbal nuclei contributes considerably to the textual configuration of Natàlia's angst. Unmindful of this correlation, Rosenthal produces a text that is structurally neutral, or more conventional. The sentence highlighted in the extract, with the verbal nexus dutifully placed in their predictable slots, fails to recapture the discursive tension undoubtedly present in the original.

One last site of conflict needs to be addressed in this subsection, which touches directly on gender-marked discursive constructions. As women who have not undergone solid formal instruction, these narrators' means for knowledge and perception remain engrained in popular or folkloric heuristics. Concomitantly, their language often reveals an assimilation of a series of popular beliefs which take the female body as a mythicised site of enigma and which, symptomatic of a misogynistic distancing, provide euphemistic explanations for certain aspects of female anatomy and biology. The acceptance of these convictions, which in the case of both Natàlia and Cecília go largely uncontested, is not only typical of the educationally naïve, as critic Sandra Schumm has suggested (Schumm 1999: 67), and



as such a central characterisation device in the novels; it is also a sign of their own estrangement from their physicality and of the extent to which these women have been deprived by their own cultural milieu of the right to a primal form of intimacy. In the following example, for instance, Cecília alludes to her menstrual blood by referring, in a most oblique manner, to the moon cycles. This connection encapsulates the popular belief that the feminine cycle is usually influenced by lunar movements. David Rosenthal obliterates this meaningful mental association in Cecília's mind, thus effacing its connotations of guilelessness and the original's almost imperceptible yet strategic presence of the female body:

EXAMPLE 8:

Un dia em vaig decidir a sortir perquè no em podia estar més allà dintre, tancada. Encara em trobava malament, **i amb la sang tanta com vulguis i la broma de la lluna.** (ECC: 75)

One day I decided to go out because I couldn't stand it anymore cooped up in that shack. I was still sick and bleeding a lot. (CS: 72)

According to Joan Ramon Resina's account, Rodoreda's stylistic creation in these novels simulates a highly localised social stratum. In his own words:

The language employed differs noticeably from the literary Catalan used by other writers of her generation; it is a speech that, while shedding the barbarisms common in spontaneous usage, reflects the vocabulary and even the grammatical competence of the working and low-middle classes, metropolitan and provincial, of pre-World War II Catalan society. (Resina 1987: 230)

While the correlation between verbal resourcelessness and working-class social location, as Resina articulates it, has by no means been exhausted, many critics have nevertheless identified the detectable lack of formal instruction that these voices reveal (Clarasó 1980: 149; Scarlett 1994b: 81; González 1999: 90), with these women's ingenuous understanding of their surroundings and of themselves (Nichols 1987: 173; Everly 2003: 52). What the examples above intend to show is that Rosenthal's translations are somewhat wide of the originals' accomplished representational value in this regard. The loquacious lexical choices he occasionally opts for, his inadequate rendering of the originals' oral quality, and his failure to recapture the narrators' unquestioning belief in popular, self-alienating lore, create a

sense of linguistic/experiential command, which is precisely a site of deafening silence in the originals.

### **2.2.2 Sites of Confinement: Detail, Domesticity, and the Duplicitous Charge of 'Femininity'**

Physical confinement also functions as an impediment for language in Rodoreda's female characters. More precisely, their speech reflects the experiential containment that characterises their lives, made patent in their expressive limitations when attempting to articulate what lies beyond the realm of immediate perception and domesticity, and in the resulting baffling amount of detail with which they remain attached to their environment. Numerous critics have singled out this aspect of the originals' style from various perspectives (Glenn 1986: 64; Sobrer 1994: 189), usually emphasising the preponderance of domestic interiors (Robles 1999) and its import for the literary creation of a gender-marked outlook (Agosín 1993: 81). In general, its significance is thrown into relief when critics try to qualify the widespread view of this narrative mode as a "feminine approach to reality" (Bou 1994: 33). I believe this common critical turn begs the question of whether femininity and taste for detail can be unproblematically associated by dint of a naturalistic discourse of innateness. Adhering to certain critics' view that much feminine literature shows a 'preference' for domestic interiors (Ciplijauskaitė 1988: 204), and that Rodoreda's novels are therefore an exemplary case, is a position liable to charges of essentialism that should be generally discarded. For the word 'preference', as used in this context, misleadingly sidesteps the surely more frequent cases of 'forced' seclusion, indeed an all-embracing lack of choice, for women historically, and certainly for the women characters to whom Rodoreda concedes a voice. I would like to suggest that, if the meticulous description of interiors is in fact a constant in both Natàlia and Cecília's discourse, it is not because their gender-marked outlook on their surroundings enforces their propension to produce extensively detailed accounts, an inference that would transport us back to Otto Jespersen's idiosyncratically scientific explications of gender differences in language (Jespersen 1922: 237-254), and which has been superseded by more sophisticated, socially

oriented theories of language and gender (Thorne, Kramarae, and Henley 1983; Graddol and Swann 1989; Coates 1993). In short, these studies have dispensed with the notion of gender as a self-explanatory, influencing factor and articulated it instead as an organic entity for whose definition social relations play a crucial role. To put it in Patricia Nichols words:

If men and women have different social roles within society, we must expect language to reflect that fact. If their life experiences are sharply different, their speech will be different. [...] The linguistic choices made by both men and women are always constrained by the options available to them, and these options are available always and only in the context of a group which shares rules for the use and interpretation of language. To speak of "women's language" outside this context is linguistically naïve. (Nichols 1983: 66)

It would therefore be short-sighted to speak of stylistic cadences in *La plaça...* and *El carrer...* axiomatically as female, overseeing what would in fact lie at the crux of such affirmation: that these voices are not just female, but oppressed and weighed down because they are female. In the case of their tendency towards the description of (domestic) detail, this salient feature of their speech is to be understood as the stylistic correlation of their experiential confinement, that is, of the fact that these women's lives revolve round their cleaning, caring, and coming in and out of houses. For Natàlia, these houses include the flat she shares with Quimet as a married woman, where she will experience increasing alienation and misery, the upper-class household she begins to clean during the war, and her second husband's flat. In Cecília's case, the houses, shacks, and flats she moves in and out of in relatively quick succession function as strong symbols of entrapment, indeed not out of preference, but out of her life-long dependence on men for financial support. Their almost obsessive depiction of the houses that encircled their activities is thus better regarded as an indicator of their physical separation from a healthy sense of autonomy and self-discretion. Paradoxically, their persistent focus on the objects that cram their houses is also what keeps the narration alive, as they function as anamneses to the thoughts and recollections that populate their consciousness. It is in this sense that Ugarte's linking of the epigraph in *La plaça del Diamant* (George Meredith's "My dear, these things are life") to this prominent feature of the novel is well-judged, although his final ascription of these narratives' focus on objects partly

to the unqualified ascendancy of “female identity” is redolent of the controversial equative tendency that I attempt to render more complex:

The things that constitute quotidian reality in Rodoreda’s novels at first seem arbitrary in the modernist sense of the epigraph, yet their tangibility and the way they serve as perplexing signals to self-awareness have to do with the status of the protagonist as both a member of a class and as a woman. As the novel unfolds, these objects become the catalysts for the exploration of issues concerning class and female identity. (Ugarte 1999: 297-298)

It is important to note that these descriptions do not function as informative or illuminating passages that aim to communicate the appearance or disposition of a particular setting or object. In other words, these descriptive passages do not serve their purpose as such. On the contrary, and because the amount of detail integrated is so large and so poorly articulated (both syntactically and lexically), the result is, as Kimberly Nance puts it, one of “disintegration” (Nance 1991: 70), of mounting incoherence. This incoherence is, however, purposefully created, and becomes a powerful symbol of these women’s entrapment. The following excerpt from *El carrer...* should help clarify this interpretation:

Van fer vestit i capa, tot de seda gruixuda amb una punta d’or al baix de la faldilla i al voltant de la capa. Al mig de la faldilla, al davant, hi havia entortolligaments de fils d’or i flors i fulles de relleu, i al mig, i al dalt del dibuix, un calze, i al damunt del calze, fent corona, cinc flors que la senyora Magdalena es pensava que eren roses, amb una pedra per cor i cada pedra era d’un color diferent. (ECC: 27)

As transpires from the passage above, the senses also play a determinant role in these women’s understanding of their surroundings. Perceptions are hardly ever processed or interpreted, but produced for what they are: mere markers of the narrators’ actions or movements, and of the happenings that conform their life stories. And thus, there are countless references to the perceptions of smells (which occupy a prominent space in both Natàlia and Cecília’s consciousness), tactile sensations, and noises, alongside the meticulous description of shapes and patterns, colours, and tonalities.

This central aspect of these novels’ textuality has been inadequately relayed in Rosenthal’s translations. On occasions, detail is significantly reduced or plainly suppressed, which yields a subsequent rearrangement of the descriptive passage as a whole. The narrators’ manifest lack of economy in these descriptions is frequently negotiated and transfigured into expressive effectiveness and focal sharpness, a

modification which undoubtedly serves a communicative purpose in the translated text, but which does away with a pivotal aspect of the originals' identity. Let us pose a few examples:

EXAMPLE 9:

El paper del menjador era **un paper amb ratlletes que feien cèrcol**. (LPD: 367)

The dining-room **wallpaper had thin circles on it**. (TD: 30)

EXAMPLE 10:

N'hi havia amb **tirants** rectes i n'hi havia amb **tirants** que s'encreuaven. Amb **agafadors** de goma per aguantar les mitges i amb **agafadors** de plàstic i de níquel tapats amb un llaç de seda. (ECC: 107)

Some had straight straps and others had crossed ones. With rubber clasps hidden by little silk bows. (CS: 106-107)

In these examples, the translational strategy applied is one of simplification of the original's syntactic convolution. In the second one, for instance, the repetition of several lexical items (*paper*, *tirants*, *agafadors*) is suppressed, and the resulting renderings read as undistinguished stretches of language. Further, there is the suppression of whole phrases in the original (in the third example, the original *per aguantar les mitges i agafadors de plàstic i de níquel* is altogether obliterated), which eliminates the narrator's endeavour to integrate as much detail as is syntactically possible, even at the expense of informative clarity.

A similar proclivity for the suppression of detail can be observed when analysing the female narrators' descriptions of sensory perceptions. As has been previously analysed, both Cecília's and Natàlia's expositions of their recollections are stimulated by their memories of purely sensory detail. To put it differently, these women will not reminisce about their emotions, opinions, or conscious thoughts at the past time they are describing: Natàlia will not try to describe the feeling of severe unrest that haunted her at the beginning of her new life with Antoni, when she feared Quimet was not dead after all and would come back one day to find she had remarried another man. Instead, she talks of how she would wander dejectedly around the streets of Gràcia, her mind fastening hopelessly on the things (on the

shapes, colours, sizes, and smells of the things) she encountered. Comparably, Cecilia will not attempt a definition of the overwhelming sense of belonging that she experienced as a little girl, when after having escaped from home, she was found and taken back by Maria-Cinta, her cousin, and her lover in their car. This man, who will momentarily become a fatherly figure for the little Cecília, is described in terms of an amalgam of olfactory and tactile sensations which, as the reader has to infer, conveyed an overpowering, and yet transient, feeling of peace.

The detailed description of sensory perceptions is crucially important for the reader's understanding of these characters' inability to transcend it. The examples reproduced below reveal an economics of suppression of detail, on the one hand, and of structural and semantic rearrangement on the other, which diffuse the characterisation of Natàlia and Cecília as women who, in an unconscious act of compensation for their lack of introspective expression, fasten upon the description of what can be immediately perceived.

EXAMPLE 11:

M'havia posat el vestit de **color de fusta de rosa**. (LPD: 357)

I'd put my **pink** dress. (TD: 19)

EXAMPLE 12:

I alçava el braç enlaire i obria la mà i tots els granets queien com una pluja i en tornava a agafar i després **m'olorava la mà i olorava l'olor de tot**. (LPD: 505)

And raise my hand and open it and all the kernels would rain down and I'd pick another handful and afterwards **I'd smell my hand and sniff all around**. (TD: 178-179)

EXAMPLE 13:

Vaig arrencar una fulla de margarida i la vaig trinxar entre els dits i vaig **olorar l'olor de l'amarg que em va recordar l'olor de la ruda i l'agre del trèvol**. (ECC: 86)

I plucked a petal off a daisy, crushed it between my fingers, and **sniff that bitter smell that reminded me of rues and clover**. (CS: 84)

Example 11 epitomises the female narrator's consistently complex perception of colours. Chromatic description in *La plaça del Diamant* is invariably intricate and detailed. There are hardly any references to basic colours but to an ample spectrum of nuances and hues that are frequently identified with real-life referents: "color de canari" (354), "color de sang de bou" (366), "color de caramel" (367). Examples of this tendency are innumerable. From a sociolinguistic stance, this type of elaborate chromatic references has been perceived as typical of women's speech (García Moutón 1999: 70). As has been a constant in the present study, however, I would like to approach them as the discursive materialisation of women's historical confinement to domesticity, where the perception and handling of colours (and, by analogy, fabrics, furniture, dressmaking or needlework) constantly occurs. It is therefore another feature of Rodoreda's concoction of a speech mode that corresponds to the language of a social group that has been segregated from the structures of active power. Rosenthal's conspicuous changing of the nuance "color de fusta de rosa" into basic "pink" shows a lack of appreciation of this central characteristic of the original. Similarly, the structural re-ordering he implements in the rest of the examples does away with the original's focus on the word *olor*. Olfactory sensations acquire a primordial centrality in these women's descriptions, to the extent that they often accompany some of their most critical moments. Ostensibly, vivid reminiscing about smells is associated with states of emerging self-awareness; also metaphorically, for the transience of both accentuates these women's limited capacity for sustained introspection.

The examples above evidence what develops as a constant in Rosenthal's translation: both Natàlia and Cecília's speech are simplified, re-ordered, and better structured. Their compulsive recollection of the smells that pervaded some of the most significant episodes of their existence is significantly ironed out by means of a number of changes in wording and sentence structure. There is a clear use of anaphoric elements which serve to avoid repetition and parallelisms (*and raise my hand and open it*). Also of significance is the patent widening of the range of vocabulary used in the original (the persistent use of the verb *olorar* becomes both *smell* and *sniff* in the translation). Lastly, the noun *olor* is suppressed on several

occasions, thus obliterating the narrators' clinging to the compelling sensations evoked by the word.

Beyond the characterisational value of this discursive leaning, its importance also lies in the fact that it constitutes one of the most substantial contributions to Rodoreda's own endeavour towards poeticity through simplicity. Poeticity in these novels can be said to spring from the arcane realm of what is almost ineffably simple. The narrators continually endeavour to evoke by means of words the natural simplicity of a familiar smell, the different hues of a rose petal, the comforting coming into contact with a baby's hand. When they do, language ceases to be an instrument but a reflection of these characters' apparent descriptive unambitiousness: its almost faltering qualities, repetitive patterns, and semantic vagueness show the very elusiveness of the detail that Natàlia and Cecília are trying to recall. Rosenthal's technique shades the measured effort with which these female characters were textually delineated in the originals, and subsequently, the latter's literary merit. From the point of view of the clash between criticism and translations that is the panoramic argument of this thesis, Anglo-American scholarship's concentration on the construction of female subjectivity in these novels finds a distortional echo in Rosenthal's texts. While his technique of stylistic redefinition could plausibly be understood as an attempt to bring these novels' story lines to prominence, by evening out what he must have perceived as dispensable discursive idiosyncrasies, it is precisely his neutralisation of the above-studied textual hallmarks that reduces the gender-marked element that critics have so prolifically addressed. In the last subsection, further evidence is offered which substantiates this argument.

### **2.2.3 Infantilised Women: Infantilised Speech**

In the present section I bring to the fore the stylistic consequences of Rodoredian female narrators being treated as immature, easily pliable individuals by the male figures that dominate their lives. I will be dealing with what can be justifiably categorised as infantilised speech, that is, as a mode of expression that exhibits an incomplete or faulty acquisition of some of language's functional, expressive mechanisms due to, on the one hand, the lack of significant interactional input in the early stages of the narrators' lives, and on the other, the limited potential for



linguistic participation that others assume of them on the grounds of their being female. The discursive features dealt with up to now synergetically converge with what will follow, in our interpretation of these women's speech as representative of an essentially infantilised, defective understanding of their environment. I will thus shed light on an often mentioned feature of Rodoreda's women characters which has, nevertheless, never been adequately investigated (Ortega 1983: 81; Bergman 1987: 103; Hart 1994: 48.) For this purpose, I will analyse their discourse at two different levels: first, at the level of functionality, that is, how both Natàlia and Cecília's speech fails to show an apprehension of two of its pivotal applications, the 'personal' and the 'heuristic', as were theorised by M. A. K Halliday in his seminal study "Relevant Models of Language" (1975) and expanded in his book *Language as Social Semiotic* (1978). Second, I will be singling out a series of recurrent stylistic traits in these women's speech which have been elsewhere identified as typical of infantile language.

In his theory, Halliday puts forward a system of linguistic models that any normal child under normal circumstances of linguistic interaction develops in the early stages of the language-acquisition process. In principle, together with the child's assimilation of language's structural and generative principles, she learns of language's underlying set of functions, that is, the various ways in which language can prove of use to her. As the child's experiential scope widens, she catches on to the notion of language as "a rich and adaptable instrument for the realization of his intentions" (Halliday 1975: 54). Therefore she will rapidly acquire the ability to put into practice what Halliday propounds as the seven principal models of language displayed by infants' language usage.

Foremost, the child realises language's most prominent function as a tool (Instrumental model), especially, as an efficient tool that can be used to express her volition. In close connection with this function, the child learns that language can almost infallibly be utilised to impose her volition on others (Regulatory model) as she gains understanding on how to implement this function accordingly. Simultaneously, the child growingly acknowledges language's prominent role in her interaction with others (Interactional model) and assimilates her identity as an

element within a larger group. Her use of language will also be an essential instrument for the construction of her own identity, and her growing need to convey her own distinct feelings, anxieties, and ideas (Personal model). Through language, the child will in fact forge her individual sense of agency and personality, or, as Halliday puts it: “Within the concept of self and actor, having discretion, or freedom of choice, the “self as speaker” is an important component” (Halliday 1975: 58). With regard to her own relationship with the world, the child realises and develops the Heuristic model, that is, language’s use as a means to probe and enquire about reality. Language appears to her not only as a tool with which to describe reality (Halliday’s Representational model) but also as the medium through which an understanding of what is not immediately perceived or apprehended can be reached. Finally, a child makes extensive use of the Imaginative model, that is, of language’s function as a magnificent articulator of the unreal. This is the model put to work when a child utters the recurrent “let’s pretend” (Halliday 1975: 62).

Although in the speaker’s progression towards maturity and adulthood, some of these models may lose their prominence or become “atrophied” (Halliday 1975: 60), these are by and large the main ways in which the child perceives and makes use of language in a normal state of *Gemeinschaft*. On the contrary, if the degree of exposure to linguistic interaction or expectancy of participation is somewhat deficient or restricted, these functions may not be fully implemented by the child, and this could constitute a cause for further maladaptation (be it educational, social or personal).

Halliday concludes that the two functions that are most likely to be impaired under restricted language-learning circumstances are the personal and the heuristic functions. Indeed, the absence of a balanced development of these two functions can play a determinant role in the individual’s later understanding of herself and of her relation to the world. It is my submission that Natàlia and Cecília’s speech reveals, in fact, a problematic seizing of Halliday’s personal and heuristic models of language, a lifelong impairment that finds its genesis in their solitary childhood, the absence of the mother figure, and the subsequent lack of natural, everyday interaction with adults.

Evidence for these characters' early lives of communicative seclusion and anomalous interaction can be found in their recollections. In Natàlia's case, we learn from the outset that her mother had died and that life at home was a protracted and eventless "viure sense paraules" (Rodoreda 1962: 365). It is worth reproducing here her reminiscences in full, as they serve to anticipate her later life of silence and inability to articulate introspection as an adult woman:

La meva mare no m'havia parlat mai dels homes. Ella i el meu pare van passar molts anys barallant-se i molts anys sense dir-se res. Passaven les tardes dels diumenges asseguts al menjador sense dir-se res. Quan la meva mare va morir, aquest viure sense paraules encara es va eixamplar. I quan al cap d'uns quants anys el meu pare va tornar a casar-se, a casa meva no hi havia res on jo em pogués agafar. Vivíem com deu viure un gat: amunt i avall amb la cua baixa, amb la cua dreta, ara és l'hora de la gana, ara és l'hora de la son; amb la diferència que un gat no ha de treballar per viure. A casa vivíem sense paraules i les coses que jo duia per dintre em feien por perquè no sabia si eren meves... (Rodoreda 1962: 364-365)

In the case of Cecília, childhood was a period of severe social isolation that was to stigmatise her truncated progression into adulthood. Deprived of any form of schooling by her adoptive parents, Cecília was concomitantly denied the possibility of normal interaction with her peers, and, more importantly, she was never allowed to develop a healthy sense of normality, that is of belonging to a group (Halliday's interactional model of language was thus stunted). As regards her communication with her adoptive family (*senyor Jaume* and *senyora Magdalena*) and also with a large number of friends and acquaintances that used to visit the couple, Cecília was customarily treated as a *tabula rasa* on which to imprint the most outrageous and distortional ideas about her own identity and the identities of her real parents. Cecília's childhood was characterised by her own interiorisation of isolation, itself a problematical process which was to lie at the basis of her own inability to establish normal, stable bonds with reality and people during adulthood.

It is thus not fortuitous that both Natàlia and Cecília developed an abnormal, declining use of the personal and heuristic functions of language. On the one hand, the environment in which they grew up was not conducive to an appropriate development of their own individualities; language was therefore never recognised as the instrument with which to articulate the expansion of their consciousness. On the contrary, the use of language was more often than not, trivialised or dispossessed of

its fundamental effects for the speaker's growth. As a consequence, both Natàlia and Cecília's speech springs from an intimate, engrained lack of self-awareness. Having been deprived of significant input or contrastive interaction as infants, and more importantly, having been brought up in silence (in Natàlia's case) or in misleading blabber (in Cecília's), these women are wholly incapable of elucidating their perception of themselves through words. As Natàlia reasons:

Era veritat, però, que el meu pare sempre em deia que jo era de mena exigent... però és que a mi em passava que no sabia ben bé per què era al món. (Rodoreda 1962: 374)

Their irregular development of Halliday's heuristic function becomes manifest in these women's essentially unquestioning approach to life. In fact, both *La plaça...* and *El carrer...* can be interpreted as two women's discursive fumbling for answers to the questions that they never formulated throughout their lives, and more importantly, as children. It is in this sense that Rodoreda's women have been categorised by critics as ingenuous, non-analytical, even gullible characters; their lives are informed by an all-embracing compliance with the status quo and, more particularly, with the activities and intrigues that others, especially men, orchestrate around them (war is one of them). Having not been incited to develop a healthy curiosity and inquisitiveness or not been satisfied whenever questions were asked, these women display an essentially puerile understanding of the world, where taboos, superstitions, and a fragmentary perception of their surroundings have not been overcome.

If we move from the functional to the formal level of analysis, we see that Rodoredian women's speech is also representative of an essentially infantile way of verbally articulating reality. In other words, it does not only show that they did not progressively develop a normal use of language's elementary functions as children (namely the personal, the heuristic, and to some extent, the interpersonal), also, it shows a defective grasp of language's structural mechanisms of verbal economy, and of the discursive principles of cohesion and coherence. Stylistically, this translates into discursive irregularities such as the narrators' inability to resort to anaphora. By anaphora we refer to the linguistic mechanism whereby a deictic word or expression (a pronoun, an adverb) is used to refer to an entity or idea (a syntactical unity) that

was previously mentioned, in order to avoid repetition or redundancy. A series of cohesive ties are thus imbricated which compel the addressee (the listener, the reader) to engage in an organic assimilation of the thematic material. The following examples are intended to show that both Natàlia and Cecília's discourse is permeated with this type of defective constructions, where whole syntactical units are contiguously repeated and rarely recaptured by a deictic pronoun. By contrast, Rosenthal's texts visibly amend the originals' lack of economy in this regard:

EXAMPLE 14:

La cuina era al costat del menjador i també dinava a la galeria i damunt dels fogons hi havia **una campana de xemeia de cuina antiga i aquesta campana de xemeia de cuina antiga**, tot i que no la feien servir perquè guisaven amb gas. (LPD: 417)

The kitchen was next to the dining room and also led to the porch and there was a big chimney with a hood that came down over the stove like in an old-fashioned kitchen, and even though they didn't use **it** since they cooked with gas. (TD: 83)

EXAMPLE 15:

Havien pintat de blau **els vidres dels fanals alts i els vidres dels fanals baixos** i a les finestres de les cases, fosques, si es veia una mica de llum, de seguida xiulets. (LPD: 460)

They'd painted the glass on **all** the streetlights blue and when a crack of light showed in the window of some dark house, whistles would start blowing right away. (TD: 131)

Rosenthal's overall strategy is to resort to anaphoric or recapitulatory elements (*it*, *all*) in order to suppress the original's marked repetition, thus rendering Natàlia's rudimentary means of expression utterly conventional and communicatively efficient. A similar strategy is implemented on those occasions when the discursive repetition signals a noticeable lack of lexical variety on the narrator's part. See for instance the following example taken from *El carrer de les Camèlies*:

EXAMPLE 16:

Em va acostar l'**encenedor** i me'l va **encendre**, després va **encendre** el seu, i mentre l'**encenia** em mirava i jo li veia la cara tacada de clarors i d'ombres. (ECC: 142)

He **lit** mine, then **his own**, and as he **did it** I looked as his face spotted with light and shadow. (CS: 142)

The repetition of the verb *encendre* in its various forms and of the noun *encenedor* serves to indicate Cecília's limited lexicon. Further, it puts emphasis on the memory of Esteve lighting a cigarette for Cecília first (a gesture that she unconsciously connected with being brought out of that status of secondariness that marked all her previous relationships). David Rosenthal obliterates this semantically loaded repetition as he draws on anaphora again, a discursive mechanism that is so prominently beyond Cecília's grasping and implementation.

The use of protracted juxtaposition with a repetitive use of linking conjunctions is also a typical trait of infantile speech which permeates the narrators' expression. In the following pair of examples, we see how the original polysyndeton is utterly suppressed. Instead, Rosenthal rephrases the whole passage by integrating more elaborate discursive connections such as causality, and a more experienced use of punctuation:

EXAMPLE 17:

Elles deien que devia ser un home molt dolent **i que** jo tenia orelles de criminal amb la medalleta enganxada a la galta **i que** el que m'havia posat el nom devia haver estat la meva mare, **i que** me l'havia posat d'esma **i que** li havia sortit del cor un nom trist. (ECC: 13)

They said he must have been a wicked man and I had ears like a murderer, with the lobes flat against my cheeks. My mother must have given me any old name and Cecília had come out **because** it was a sad name. (CS: 8)

As far as the fictional plot is concerned, there are a number of inexplicable suppressions in Rosenthal's *The Time of the Doves*, which damage the original characterisation of Natàlia as an infantile subject. On occasions, entire paragraphs are obliterated which were paramount for the readers' unfolding interpretation of the female narrator as a woman who cannot establish reliable, consistent bonds with reality. In the following passage, for instance, the second paragraph is suppressed in its entirety in Rosenthal's translation (28):

EXAMPLE 18:

Quan ens vam dir adéu amb en Quimet al peu de la parada del tramvia, vaig sentir que en Cintet li deia, no sé pas d'on l'has tret, tan bufona... I vaig sentir el riure d'en Quimet, ha, ha, ha...

Vaig desar els rosaris a la taula de nit per abocarme a mirar el jardí de sota. El fill dels veïns, que feia el soldat, prenia la fresca. Vaig fer una boleta de paper, vaig tirar-l'hi, i em vaig amagar (LPD: 365)

The combination of these two paragraphs in the original points to Natàlia's own immaturity at the time she was found and chosen by Quimet, and subsequently robbed of her right to arbitrate her own decisions by a man who would at all times impose his judgements on her. Her problematic assimilation of this imposition materialises in a series of spontaneous and irrational acts such as the one almost epigrammatically described in the second paragraph above. One can hypothesise about the reasons why Rosenthal must have decided this passage was dispensable. Perhaps, its strategic value in characterising Natàlia as still somewhat impish and puerile was judged to subtract from the graveness of her situation and was therefore suitably excised. A similar refashioning can be said to inform Francesc Betriu's filmic version of the novel, where, as Patricia Hart explains "the omission of troubling, unpleasant, or ambiguous events" (Hart 1994: 44) is carried out with the calculated effect of a "prettification of Colometa and her problems" (Hart 1994: 47).<sup>7</sup> There are further instances of this type of modifications in Rosenthal's text which betray a lack of appreciation of both Natàlia's infantilised status and Quimet's reinforcement of it. Let us quote the following paired examples, where Quimet scolds his wife for some insignificant reason, an episode which she retells as neutrally as ever, but which the reader has to detect as another example of Quimet's many modes of aggression towards her:

EXAMPLE 19:

Me'n vaig anar amb en Quimet i, de passada, per encàrrec de la senyora, vaig deixar una llista a l'adroguer. Quan vaig sortir, en Quimet, que s'havia quedat al carrer, **em va dir si badava**, que les veges d'aquell adroguer eren de les millors que mai havia vist, que ja s'hi havia fixat quan tot just érem promesos. (LPD: 427)

When I came out Quimet, who'd stayed outside, asked if I'd noticed that the birdseed in that grocery store was the best he'd ever seen, that he'd noticed it when we'd just gotten engaged. (TD: 96)

---

<sup>7</sup> Patricia Hart articulates a non-condemnatory analysis of Betriu's film. Her aim is to approach its difference as a legitimate reformulation of Natàlia's story with a view to exalting national sentiments, in detriment of its feminist value. For a censorious approach to the film, see Ball 1992.

Rosenthal's suppression of Quimet's patronising admonishment to Natàlia is not justifiable, as it evens out both Quimet's almost humiliating treatment of his wife and the significant effect this treatment has, namely, to delay Natàlia's already protracted evolution towards self-affirmation and maturity.

In *El carrer de les Camèlies*, analogous instances of textual suppression subtract from the perception of Cecília as an infantilised subject. The character of Cecília is in fact, one of Rodoreda's most isolated and fragmented creations. Abandoned by her real parents and adopted by a couple to whom she never grows to like, Cecília's destiny is to walk the streets of a grim and hostile Barcelona in search of a comforting fatherly love. Disappointment and the increasingly violent relationships in which she engages, hinder a healthy process towards maturation and self-knowledge. Thus, she is trapped in her own underdeveloped conscience, and leads an erratic life which unfolds fitfully according to the most basic principles of physical necessities (among which hunger plays a central role), fear, and a very unsophisticated version of love and pride, understood mainly as self-preservation. It is therefore not coincidental that Cecília is characterised as a woman with a rudimentary relationship with reality, childish and narcissistic, who will never manage to fully comprehend, let alone overcome, the reasons for her alienation.

In the following example, Cecília recalls her marked feeling of shame on the day Marc aggressively reveals he knew that she had lived in the shacks. Shame in fact overrides the physical pain caused by Mark's violent grabbing of her arms, as Cecília remembers, a meaningful detail which symbolises the female narrator's most fundamental sense of self-respect and a specifically infantile trait of her personality:

EXAMPLE 20:

Em va deixar anar i va dir que estava bé per una noia que havia viscut en una barraca. Quan va ser fora vaig plorar, no pel mal als braços, que ja m'hi sortien tot de blaus petits, sinó perquè jo no li havia dit mai que havia viscut en una barraca i l'única persona que li ho havia pogut dir era la Paulina. I ella sabia que em feia vergonya que en Marc ho sabés. (ECC: 122-123)

He let go and said that was just about right for a girl who'd live in a shack, and the only person who could have told him was Paulina. (CS: 122)



Rosenthal's noticeable exercise of suppression above is also present in a highly significant passage where Cecília's idiosyncratic relationship with reality is most manifest. The following words evoke a spontaneous game of tenderness that Cecília once played with Esteve, the male benefactor who will salvage her from death in the streets and who will bring her back to a life of relative tranquility and economic stability towards the end of the novel:

EXAMPLE 21:

I jo, per riure, li vaig passar una mà damunt del pit i li vaig preguntar, ¿damunt de què? Mig ensenyat va contestar, **una mà bonica damunt del pit**. No, li vaig dir, **una mà damunt de tot el sol de l'home**. Li vaig posar la mà damunt del cor i li vaig preguntar, damunt de què? I va dir, una mà petita damunt d'un cor. No, li vaig dir, una mà plana damunt d'un patir. Em vaig tirar avall i li vaig posar la mà damunt d'un genoll i li vaig preguntar, damunt de què? **I va dir, una mà damunt d'un genoll**. No, **li vaig dir, una mà damunt d'un os rodó**. **I després li vaig posar la mà plana ben al mig i sota del ventre i li vaig preguntar, damunt de què?** Aleshores em va agafar per sota dels braços i em va tirar amunt i quan va tenir la meua cara ben arran de la seva, em va dir rient, bandolera. (ECC: 146)

And for fun I put my hand on his chest and asked "What's underneath?" Half asleep, he said "**A pretty hand on a man's sun.**" I put my hand on his heart and asked "What's underneath?" And he said "A little hand on a heart." "No," I said, "a flat hand on suffering." I snuggled under the covers and put my hand on his knee and asked, "What's underneath?" Then he grabbed me under my arms and pulled me up and when my face was next to his he laughed and said "Bandit." (CS: 146)

The words by Cecília above are extremely representative of her peculiar and unique mode of perception. What Esteve simply describes in terms of objective referentiality, Cecília translates into her language of subjectivity and intuition, thus revealing a mode of cognition which originates at this woman's most intimate impulses and irrational mental connections. The highly poetical register achieved in this passage lies precisely in the inextricability of Cecília's words, in the inaccessibility of their meaning. But this semantic obscurity can also be a cause for impatience for the translator, as Rosenthal's significant modifications of the original may reveal. In effect, he not only obliterates whole sentences (thus shortening a dialectic game to which Rodoreda had originally granted significant textual weight), but also attributes Cecília's words to Esteve, in a translational turn that can only be put down to an erroneous reading of the original. The effects of these changes are,

once again, detrimental for an interpretation of Cecília as an alienated woman with a peculiarly elementary outlook on reality.

The intentionality prompting these translational changes is difficult to discern. Regarding Rosenthal's discursive amendments, one could put forward the hypothesis that he falls victim to the many readings of Rodoredian fictional texts as springing from a narrator who is often identified with the author herself. In other words, as was hinted by Randolph Pope in his 1994 article, the 'deficiencies' that characterise Rodoreda's writing are not taken as deliberate stylistic choices laden with functionality, but the result of Mercè Rodoreda's own early lack of formal education. It could thus be maintained, though this conjecture may imply a particularly heavy-handed charge, that the translator ascribes Rodoreda's female narrators' lack of expressive resources to the author herself, and sets out on an all-embracing project of improvement of the originals' language. David Rosenthal would then be overlooking Rodoreda's conscientious creation of a literary voice, the voice, as I have tried to demonstrate, of a prototypically isolated woman character, and attributing its unorthodox stylistic features to a lapse into inadequate writing.

Even when to venture the plausibility of this hypothesis may seem overreaching, and even unjust in the light of Rosenthal's life-time commitment to the translation and general diffusion of Rodoreda's opus, the truth is that the modifications and unaccounted omissions that intersperse *The Time of the Doves* and *Camellia Street* reveal a reading insensible to the significance of the original novels' characteristic stylistic contour, and hence damage Rodoreda's own painstaking conception of her literary style. Equally relevant is, I find, the dissonance thus generated between the diffusely female voice -barely allowed a presence in Rosenthal's texts, and the persistently gender-oriented force informing the received wisdom about Rodoreda in Anglo-American academia, a mismatch that evinces a somewhat inchoate state of the art.

## 2.3 Conclusion

The previous lines explain the most immediate consequences of Rosenthal's various modifications to the original texts. As they stand, his translations waywardly oppose

the feminist oriented parameters that have enfolded Anglo-American critical reception of the author. In more practical terms, the English-speaking reader or researcher conversant with the widespread critical figurations of the author would find, when turning to the translated text, only a shadowy fraction (a glaring void in the worst cases) of the gendered hallmarks almost unanimously hailed by scholars. A less informed, more casual reader unconcerned with critical work would irreparably miss them. The fact that this impressive contradiction has entirely eluded researchers' attention, and that Rosenthal's translations continue to receive glowing critical reports, bring us to the larger structures of entailment to which I would like to finally attend.

The study of translations as invaluable pointers of critical reception has already begun to be exploited. Here and there, several studies probe translated texts with an eye to elucidating relevant avenues in the dissemination of cultural capitals, by centering on particular prioritisations, selective choices, and telling alterations which respond to an agenda larger than the one circumscribed by optimal linguistic and cultural transposition. My aim is to second and further this trend by focusing on a specific type of cultural interaction, namely the one taking place within university departments and in those writings put in circulation for academic consumption and preservation. If the translations of Mercè Rodoreda's novels into English are used mainly for academic purposes (a hypothesis confirmed to me by The Graywolf Press), then their value necessarily enters into positive dialogue with the latter's tenets. This brings about the widespread perception that critical work and translations constitute a monolithically consistent point of reference bodying forth the enthusiastic critical reception of Rodoreda's work in North America and the theoretical premises, gender in this case, in accordance to which this enthusiasm was articulated and fructified. A study of the selection, paratext, and structural changes enfolding the translations substantiates this hypothesis. An attentive examination of their textual bulk, however, contradicts it. This duality showcases what is one of the central aims of this thesis: to show that the combinatory potential lying in the juxtaposition of metacriticism and translation studies as a research tool amplifies the already meaningful insights brought about by these innovative, yet still fledgling

fields of study. The force of this combination resides in that it bestows visibility, not only on the selective affiliations, personal or collective loyalties, and strains that impinge on scholarly work (and translations, though this is not as yet institutionally clear, are scholarly work), a working assumption already dear to these disciplines' maxims and objectives separately, and fully operative since the eighties. The force of their combination resides in that it helps disclose the patchiness with which these mutually influential contingencies are applied across the board, and the myriad counterinstances lying dormant in what appear to be ideologically coherent projects of transmission.

## Chapter 3: Esther Tusquets and the Entrapment of Rhetoric

The work of the Catalan writer Esther Tusquets has been studied for more than two decades now, an ongoing enterprise that continues to be promoted mainly by Anglo-American criticism. Due to the subject matter tackled in most of her novels, the subversive potential in all her female characters' identity crises, and to her distinctive style, her work has been customarily examined in direct relation to feminist premises. Further, it has been frequently put forward as the closest rendering in Spanish contemporary literary production to what has been elsewhere classified as *écriture féminine* (Gascón Vera 1992: 70; Hart 1991; 1992: 71; Tsuchiya 1992; Jones 1992: 61; Ichiishi 1994: 20; Sobejano-Morán 1994: 52), or also as containing references to the plausibility of a female return (or indeed, discovery) of a pre-verbal, semiotic state of language, as was advanced by the French theorist and writer Julia Kristeva (Servodidio 1987: 164). The thrust of much of this academic work, it seems, is to try to locate Tusquets's work within the two main literary movements developing in Spain at the time she published her first novel, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978), namely, the Spanish New Novel and the so-called boom of literature written by women in the eighties. In more or less convincing ways, Tusquets's work has been studied as an accommodating ground for new images of women, as well as of new thematic alternatives and forms. For two decades now, her opus has lent itself to this kind of analysis, the truth being that her work is nowadays heralded as a milestone of Spanish feminist literature in most academic sectors.

In recent years, however, there has been a noticeable, yet tentative move towards greater scepticism about the truly feminist value of her work. Several voices here and there adumbrate the idea of Tusquets's novels functioning as the antechamber of feminism: a sort of playful experimentation on the full potential of feminist imagery, forms and plots, which retreats back into a conventionalised denouement before the eventual outcome is reached. Along these lines is, for instance, the review on Ichiishi's translation of *Para no volver* (*Never to Return*, 1999) by Julia Biggane.

In this brief, but convincingly argued review, Biganne indicates the reasons for Tusquets's novel resulting in a "claustrophobic and frustrating reading experience" (2001: 663). In short, she states that "the fiction can [...] be highly disquieting, particularly for readers identifying themselves as feminist" (Biganne 2001: 663), as her female characters always seem to find a good reason not to subvert the greatly damaging forces of patriarchy exerted upon their lives, which, nevertheless, they have no difficulty identifying.

The lesbian affairs depicted in her novels (which have come to characterise the majority of her fictional writings up to date) have also been frequently described as desultory. In her most recent article about Tusquets, Abigail Lee Six wonders why both female characters in *Con la miel en los labios* (1997b), who engage in a lesbian affair central to the novel's plot, decide to put an end to it, due to a number of reasons which, as Lee Six says, are far from clear in the text:

So, if in both texts the female lover is given an immeasurably more sympathetic portrayal than the male rival, the question we are bound to ask is: why do Sara and Inés both choose the man in the end? (Lee Six 2002: 38-39).

In a highly persuasive article, Cristina Ortiz Ceberio pursues this line of thought further by ultimately attributing this absence of a real subversive plan to the author herself. Her study concludes with a similar question, hurled at Tusquets in a fit of disappointment both as a reader and as an academic:

el lector de *Con la miel en los labios* no puede, ante el rechazo que plantea el texto de representar una simbolización triunfante del lesbianismo, clausurar su lectura sin enjuiciar el texto todo con la misma pregunta que formula Inés al final de la novela cuando, después de decidir casarse con Ricard, encuentra a Andrea y ésta le cuenta que ella también se casa con un arquitecto. Pregunta simple y llana que de la misma manera que se lanzan las protagonistas ante su mutua aceptación del convencionalismo y supresión forzada de su deseo, podría hacerse a la escritora por las mismas razones. Pregunta en definitiva a la novela entera, a su reiteración, a su falta de atrevimiento: "¿Por qué?" (Ortiz Ceberio 2001: 67).

Perhaps the most vociferous argument against Tusquets's elusive feminist agenda was articulated in 1993 by Hispanist critic Geraldine C. Nichols. Even before *Con la miel en los labios* had been published, Tusquets's literary trajectory was already the subject of mounting suspicion among those critics who, like Nichols, had initially championed her works as irrefutably feminist. In her article, 'Minding her P's and her

Q's: The Fiction of Esther Tusquets', Nichols engages with a metacritical account of the extra-literary reasons why Tusquets's works attracted so much attention within American university departments during the eighties. Her novels seemed suffused with a mode of stylistic and thematic transgression that immediately caught the eye of an also incipient type of critic, namely the feminist literary critic. This new scholarly training would soon fructify in the myriad articles and monographs proliferating around a series of until then unknown writers, who were now heralded as exemplary practitioners of a gynocentric episteme. By her own admission, Nichols's early articles on Tusquets fell prey to this interpretative bustle. However, a less hot-headed analysis of the Catalan author's novelistic output shows, in Nichols's view, that the subtending agenda is not feminist but, in fact, obstructive of potential emancipation. Moreover, Tusquets's works are ultimately viewed as deceitful artefacts to which the discriminating critic must remain constantly alert. To put it in Nichols's words:

Since Tusquets's fictions end well in an aesthetic sense, they are pleasurable, and this very sentiment encourages us to identify with their conclusions: that dissonance will always be silenced, that women will remain in unhappy relationships with their voice and talents submerged for convention's sake. Feminist readers, committed to change in the social order, must resist assenting to such values, no matter how seductively they are packaged. We must become cannier readers, thinking women who refuse to turn into the beak that grips us. (Nichols 1993: 171)

From Nichols's vehement tirade against Tusquets's apparent conservatism to the multiple, more recent articles and reviews that second this position (Collins 2000; Smith 2002), a parabolic pattern going from concertedly positive critical consideration to increasing disagreement and distrust has encircled the literary product. This course of action raises a number of questions: why is this increasing sense of suspicion at Tusquets's work developing at present? What is the motivation underlying this gradual sense of disillusionment? More generally, and turning to the rationale behind most of the articles reviewed above, why should Tusquets's work be suddenly appraised in terms of how well it adjusts to the feminist standpoint from which it has been ordinarily approached? Ultimately, why is the fictional work being called into question, instead of the academic apparatus implemented on it almost instantaneously after its publication?

It is my contention that there does exist a noteworthy contradiction in Tusquets's work, but this should not only be sought for in the relational space between criticism and literary work, that is, with regard to how adequately it responds to a number of expectations created outside its fictional plot, but within the novels themselves. Furthermore, I believe there has been an ongoing avoidance of this contradiction by literary critics, even by those who have sensitively translated and delved into Tusquets's work, like Barbara F. Ichiishi, which has made room for a sort of critical evaluation which is anticipatory at best, somewhat imaginary in the worst cases. In general, this criticism has created a number of expectations about her works' subversive potential which Tusquets may have never envisaged for them: many goals have been established that her works never really set out to achieve. Hence the current critical disillusionment detected among some (feminist) critics of Tusquets, who have only just begun to address the possible grounds for it.

This contradiction, I will suggest, originates in Tusquets's treatment of 'literariness' in all her works, including her most recent, autobiographical *Correspondencia privada* (2001), that is, literariness understood both as an internal, overwhelming force which shapes the characters' perceptions of the world around them, and as an identifiable, formal constant in her style. In other words, there is a seemingly irreconcilable relationship between 'the literary' put forward as the fake, the distorted or artificial (a prism which seems to be specific and intrinsic to her female characters' understanding of life and love) and Tusquets's novels being themselves the embodiment of a very specific kind of laborious and, indeed, by definition, literary style.

It has become almost platitudinous to talk of Tusquets's female characters (especially, the three Elia's of her trilogy)<sup>8</sup> in terms of the damaging effect their rhetorical views of life and love have exerted upon their lives. Geraldine Nichols talks about this feature as one of the "themes that underpin the conservative message

---

<sup>8</sup> The female narrator of *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* was unnamed, even though many critics have presupposed she was called Elia like the two other female protagonists in *El amor...* and *Varada...* The author herself has added this significant piece of information in Castalia's 1997 edition of *El mismo mar...*, where the protagonist is called by her lover Clara in a moment of emotional capitulation: "y me tumbo a su lado, a sus espaldas, y ella despega por fin los labios y gime 'Elia no te vayas'" (Tusquets 1997a: 202).



of Tusquets's fiction" (Nichols 1993: 166), as it is these women's persistence in living life as literature that almost invariably brings them to the state of despondency that provokes the narrative. In this sense, Tusquets offers a consistent literary representation of women's quest for a grandiloquent, long-lasting (truly literary) love, to whose pursuit they have been instructed to devote their lives, even when its true existence is more than questionable. Her fiction is therefore permeated with a ubiquitous sinking feeling, a kind of "fatalistic" drive (Vásquez 1988: 10), ultimately corroborated by her protagonists' refusal to break free from the ideological and social bonds that subject them (only her novels *Varada tras el último naufragio* and to some extent *Para no volver* could be said to escape this vicious circle).

If we take the leap from the fictional content of these novels and their characterisation devices, to their formal, stylistic features, we may find this vicious circle is truly all-embracing, as Tusquets's writing similarly responds to a kind of literary, contrived impulse which detaches the plot depicted from a clear sense of reality. Tusquets's style, I will argue, is a central feature of her novelistic production contributing to the general artificiality characterising the lives and quests of the female characters that people it.

Owing to this continuous interplay between 'the literary' as both content and form, I will be drawing on a methodology that focuses primarily on stylistic elucidation. There is a significant lack of analyses of women's peninsular literature from a formal point of view, even when, as in the case of Tusquets, many works lend themselves readily to stylistic enquiry. It seems to me that an approximation to Tusquets's work as a whole and to the particularities of the motives and thinking underlying her uniqueness should begin with a pre-eminently stylistic approach. Further, I will argue that because of the noticeable analytical focus on the more thematic aspects of her work and the often passing or misguided treatment of its stylistic value, criticism on the Catalan author has been misdirected into the apparent impasse in which it currently finds itself.

The rationale supporting the present study may be substantiated in the following structure: firstly, I intend to look at the ways Tusquets's work has been classified, mainly in relation to the Spanish New Novel (a movement the novel *Tiempo de*

*silencio* by Martín-Santos foreshadowed, and which flourished in the works of writers such as Juan Benet, Torrente Ballester, or Juan Goytisolo), and as a part of the second generation of women novelists (the Post-Franco generation, as opposed to the *Generación de Medio Siglo*) who were increasingly aware of the theories on female subjectivity and identity coming from French and Anglo-American communities (Riera 1982). In order to try to establish the stylistic (and generational) link between Tusquets and the *Nueva Novela* (a link that numerous critics have acknowledged, along with the author herself), I will resort to a number of exercises on textual comparison and stylistic investigation in relation to that movement's key figure, Juan Benet. I will argue that both authors share a highly aesthetic literary agenda, which in various ways departs from the pre-eminently testimonial literary current that preceded them. However, a significant difference will arise between them as to the prominent presence of 'the poetic' in Tusquets's work. This poetic force in Tusquetsian discourse, which critics have renamed as "the baroque" (Nichols 1992: 93; Dolgin 1988: 398) or "the feminine" (Nichols 1992; Dolgin 2001: 42), is a key indicator of Tusquets' style as an embodiment of the distortional prism through which her female characters perceive life.

Secondly, I will look at how criticism (particularly Anglo-American) has tended to propose Tusquets's novelistic production as an example of *écriture féminine* and the writer herself as a sort of 'peninsular priestess' of that writing mode. Initially, this connection was only delineated in very tentative terms (Hart 1991, 1992; Gascón Vera 1992). However, in most recent years, this position has gained ground among certain critics who have begun solidly to proclaim a direct link between the maxims of *écriture féminine* as they were formulated by French theorists and Tusquets's literary agenda. The solidity of these studies lies in their substantial treatment of Tusquets's style, as well as the content of her fictional apparatus. Barbara F. Ichiishi's *The Apple of Earthly Love* is a convincingly argued, thoroughgoing analysis of Tusquets's literary production. Through an appraisal of her distinctive style and articulation of a feminine-based experience of life, Ichiishi's argument progresses steadily towards her identification of Tusquets's literary alternative with the tenets of *écriture féminine*.

I would like to advance a different appraisal of Tusquets's style, in relation to *écriture féminine*. For this purpose, I will be focusing on one of the predominant features of this style as has been formulated and practised by French scholars and women writers alike, namely, its supposedly fragmented, almost impulsive nature, which, as I will try to demonstrate, is not a feature of Tusquets's style. Further, I will claim the equation between Tusquets and *écriture féminine* has contributed to the increasing sense of disenchantment amongst those critics who have continued to probe into her literary trajectory, only to find her work does not readily lend itself to many of the premises of feminine and feminist literature as it is understood in both French and Anglo-American academia.

Once a tenable delineation of Tusquets's stylistic discourse in relation to the literary currents with which it is usually connected has been established, and a definition of 'the poetical' in her works has been proposed, I will move on to look at the ways in which the latter has been fictionalised as a systematic, dominating force which distorts her women's grappling with such experiences as love, sexuality, social connections, and friendship. This force, inasmuch as it originates in the apparatus of unrealistic expectations foisted on women in traditional societies, leads them to a series of successive disappointments which result in the severe identity crises from which Tusquets's women often speak. These women are, in fact, able to identify the roots of their entrapment (hence their numerous references to 'the literary' as an antagonistic drive in their lives), but fail to overcome it in any successful way. I will suggest Tusquets's articulation of their female voices through her admittedly manneristic discourse can be interpreted as evidence towards this all-embracing entrapment in which the author also partakes. I will be looking for corroboration of this argument in Tusquets's most recent, autobiographical publication, *Correspondencia privada*.

What will ultimately emerge from this tripartite exposition of the argument is, I hope, an ampler understanding of the apparent contradiction underlying Esther Tusquets's novelistic production, namely, that her style embodies precisely the type of rhetorical and romanticised convictions that exert such a damaging effect on her characters. Similarly, and by analysing the very parameters according to which

Tusquets's discourse has been studied (feminist thought and feminine stylistics, primarily), I intend to show their basic unsuitability when applied for this purpose; Tusquets's literary agenda, I will argue, cannot be said to adjust to feminist premises as they have been defined by French and Anglo-American academic communities. And yet, the conclusion should not ensue that her work is any less valid, or that Tusquets herself is not a 'good feminist writer', but that her female characters are still belittled by a society that has impaired their abilities for autonomous perception. What is more significant, her characters are unprepared and in many ways, unwilling to break free from these ties. Tusquets's novels are, I will conclude, reiterative representations of that crucial moment when her women could have, but did not, create an alternative discourse.

### **3.1 Stylistic Concern in Tusquets and Benet: Approaching the Poetical**

Juan Benet's first novel, *Volverás a Región*, was written between 1962 and 1964, and published in 1967, after an arduous process towards full recognition that the author has often recalled in his essayistic production (Benet 1974b). His novel was to be gradually acknowledged, from that year on, as a momentous contribution to the establishment in Spain of the literary current termed *Nueva Novela*. The contrast soon became clear between the literary production of these years and that of the previous decades, as the new novelists articulated a tangible breakage from the supposed stylistic transparency of the neorealist novels of the 50s and 60s, as well as from their value as historical or sociological chronicles (in a time when the press itself could not fulfil this function in any reliable way).

In response to the noticeable tendency towards 'costumbrismo' (Compitello 1984: 12; Martínez Torrón 1980: 50) in the literature of this time, the novels of Juan Goytisolo, Martín-Santos and, indeed, Juan Benet, would all constitute a more or less concerted group of literary projects where plots were represented in an increasingly problematic way, by means of several literary techniques that seem to deconstruct the reader's understanding, and indeed expectations of the fundamental underpinnings of novelistic creation. Taken individually, the novels of these authors aim at specific

self-referentiality, that is, they have been written to be appraised mainly as representations valid on their own premises, and according to their own informational and stylistic values which, above all, abhor sociological mimesis. Benet himself has formulated this feature, pivotal, of course, to his literary production, but which he considers indispensable and elementary to any literary work that aims to be apprehended as such. In a series of articles and lectures compiled in his many theoretical works, he vehemently attacks the general thrust of much novelistic production during these two decades of post-war Spain, thus evidencing the predominantly aesthetic agenda underlying his literary practice:

Como fuerza política el arte ha sido siempre muy débil; [...] Y cuando la cultura y el arte se ven obligados a tomar sus propias armas para defender sus ideales [...], no hacen sino rebajarse, alejarse de sus metas específicas para emprender una lucha de circunstancias, inexistente en una situación normal [...]. Por eso no es raro que la producción artística y cultural de todo un país cuyo estamento intelectual se lanza al combate contra el poder establecido, sea de una calidad mediocre, lastrada con elementos bastardos y despectiva de todo refinamiento. El arte en estas circunstancias es un capítulo de la lucha política y pertenece a la historia de esa lucha en mucha mayor medida que a la historia del arte. Tal es el caso, a mi modo de ver, de la novela realista de los años 50 y 60 [...]. (Benet 1981: 27-28)

Despite the belated publication of her first novel in 1978, Tusquets's work has often been studied as in many ways connected to the Spanish New Novel, and more specifically to the works of Juan Benet (Molinaro 1991: 13; Dolgin 1991: 84-85; Ichiishi 1994: 211; Sanz Villanueva 1997: 13). The analogies between Tusquets and authors such as Benet have been customarily sought for at the level of novelistic structure and their penchant for an opaque, at times truly impenetrable writing mode. The author herself has acknowledged this generational link in several interviews (Dolgin 1988: 403; Nichols 1989: 77, 81).

In the following lines I will give a brief overview of the notion of style in Benetian literary theory, with especial regard to its primordial nature in any literary project. It will then prove easy to draw a link between Benet and Tusquets, who has also acknowledged the supremacy of style in her opus.

Even though he seldom directly addressed his own literary production in order to shed some light on the enigmas that critics continue to unravel (in many cases, to little avail), Juan Benet has left a vast essayistic production to which readers and critics alike have repeatedly turned for clarification. In a series of non-fictional works

that he published between 1966 and 1981,<sup>9</sup> the avid reader of Benet will find numerous, invaluable considerations for the understanding of this author's singular literary practice.

Juan Benet advocates a total supremacy of style over content; form and structure should lie at a higher level than argument or plot in any narrative creation. This position was already adumbrated in his words above, and it constitutes the pith and core of his book *La inspiración y el estilo* (1966). Here, the author asseverates that style is the author's best asset in his quest for an original, valuable contribution to the history of literature, at a point when, Benet reflects, most literary production is adulterate. In correspondence with inspiration, which he defines as "Esa ayuda externa, ese aire que alguien sopla y le insufla para volar por las desconocidas alturas desde donde se ve un mundo distinto" (Benet 1970: 11), he proposes a definition of style as the writer's most important enterprise. To put it in his words: "El lector alcanza con el estilo la libertad" (Benet 1966, in Martínez Torrón 1980: 46), as he is no longer trying to reconstruct, by means of the trite, limited grammatical devices with which we are all endowed, a reality which is already there, but is now, once he has forged his own style, in a position to formulate an alternative reality. This leads us to the Benetian idea of style as a tool with which to probe into the obscurities of the writer's psyche and the full complexity of his/her perceptions. When putting these into words, the writer should not try to delimit or circumscribe them (nor to translate them into intelligibility or prescribed modes of rationality). Because of its function as a means for investigation of the obscure, style's nature will be obscure by necessity. Irrationality and an overruling sense of enigma will be constant characteristics of this style, which once it has been acquired, will accompany the author in every literary project he/she embarks upon. The ineludible complexity of his style has been occasionally acknowledged by Benet himself, as in the following words, both honestly and ironically:

In the first place, I must say that if I have not been clearer in any sentence or paragraph, or page of my fiction, it is because I have been unable to do so. What I

---

<sup>9</sup> His essayistic production, most of which I will be drawing upon for the present discussion, comprises: *La inspiración y el estilo* (1966), *Puerta de tierra* (1969), *El ángel del señor abandona a Tobías* (1976), *En ciernes* (1976), *Del pozo y del numa (un ensayo y una leyenda)* (1978) and *La moviola de Eurípides* (1981).

have said, even of an obscure nature, I have said in the clearest possible way that was in my power. (Benet 1984, viii)

There is a significant sense of analogy between Benet's words above and Tusquets's own interesting considerations about her style. In a far less well-wrought way (she has not published any work on literary theory to date), Esther Tusquets also talks about her style as surprising (even to herself) and ineluctable (Nichols 1989: 73), but above all, as the most powerful presence in her novels. In effect, to the question by Stacey Dolgin as to "how biographical" her works are, Tusquets replies:

Se está más en el estilo. Creo que lo que soy se ve más por el modo en que están escritas las novelas que por lo que pasa. Mi modo de escribir es barroco, envolvente, volviendo sobre unas cosas y otras, muy obsesivo, muy de puntualizar, muy de repetir, muy esteticista. Creo que es más esto que no lo que les pasa a los protagonistas. (Dolgin 1988: 401)

Tusquets's own reflections on her style are pregnant with clues as to what her literary programme truly is. In particular, her use of the adjective *esteticista* could be said to establish a linkage between her opus and a literary tradition most noticeably present in the Modernist group of the beginning of the century, which the new novelists of the 60s and 70s partly aimed to emulate. Tusquets's stylistic choice, as she describes it, seems to pertain to the general literary attitude developing immediately before her, permeated with extreme intellectualism and experimentalism, which, as was pointed out by Jo Labanyi, leaves the reader with "nothing but language about language" (Labanyi 1999: 151).

It seems possible to suggest, thus, as a starting point, that one of the most salient analogies between Tusquets and Benet is their manifest engagement with style, or rather, with the formulation of a stylistically distinctive narrative voice, which grants continuity to their opus, and is progressively reinforced in all of their novels with pertinacious commitment. Many further analogies could be established between the two writers. In general, and beyond their shared preoccupation with style, both authors can be said to have developed a number of similar narrative techniques whose discursive function seems to be, primarily, to arrest the narrative flow. In this study, however, I will be exploring a series of further stylistic idiosyncrasies as a first step toward the understanding of Tusquets's style as embracing a particular kind of

intensely subjective poeticity, which will help us envisage the dimensions of the discursive enclosure from which her characters speak.

The excerpts chosen for this comparison bring together both authors' descriptive techniques in an illustrative way (see Appendices 1 and 2). Firstly, both these descriptions seem to have an objective in common: to dilate on their referents in such a way that the readers' understanding of them is both postponed and jeopardised. The techniques to accomplish this purpose are, however, significantly distinct, though I will begin by addressing their one shared feature, namely: their syntactical choices.

There is a manifest tendency in both texts towards protracted parataxis (the succession of clauses and sentences with no syntactic marker of coordination or subordination), though it could be argued that Tusquets's text, and indeed the entirety of her works, rely more strongly on this technique. This is usually achieved through an extensive use of several means of punctuation (commas, semicolons, hyphens, hyphens followed by commas, parentheses), which assist the authors in their task of inserting yet another piece of information about a referent which does not, by dint of this technique, become any clearer. There is also in both authors an extensive use of hypotaxis. Sanz Villanueva has eloquently described this discursive procedure as "una especie de muñecas rusas de la sintaxis" (Sanz Villanueva 1997: 32), whereby the author creates a spiral string of data put one after the other, weaving their way towards the most extraneous, and yet functional, piece of detail. The main effect of this tactic, as was indicated above, is to delay the communication of constructive meaning, that is, the appearance of a relevant piece of information which will help the reader reassemble the semantic and syntactic amalgam that has so far been presented. The following words by Herzberger are representative of both authors' narrative technique:

La presentación diferida de la idea central de una frase ocurre a menudo hacia el final, manteniendo de este modo al lector en un estado de curiosidad (y tal vez confusión) hasta la última palabra. (Herzberger in Vernon 1986: 34)

This formal characteristic connects both Benet and Tusquets with the literary movements their works are often aligned with. In effect, the most salient feature of the Spanish *Nueva Novela* is these novels' overt formal exhibitionism, a tendency re-inaugurated in 1962 by Martín-Santos in *Tiempo de Silencio*, and which was to find



its most committed mentors in the figures of Benet, of course, but also in the early Javier Marías, with *El Monarca del Tiempo* (1978) and *El Siglo* (1983), and in Julián Ríos's *Larva*, which Jo Labanyi regards as the "culmination of this literary current" (Labanyi 1999: 152).

However, there is a crucial difference between Benet's overall techniques for the dosage of information and Tusquets's, as in general, the latter's correspond to a delayed, but ultimately coherent plot aimed at the representation of a certain class of women's problematic perceptions, leading them to a potential turning point in their lives. While, argumentally speaking, Benet's novels follow a paradoxical and delusive story line "presented as lengths of broken thread" (Nelson in Manteiga, Herzberger and Compitello 1984: 31), Tusquets's novels partake of a sense of closure, achieved by the final reunion of the memories and perceptions which constitute the narrative core, and which are finally imbued with an apparently worthy message. This sense of argumental closure is, according to many critics (Smith 1992: 95), what detaches Tusquets's work from the purely experimental drive characterising most of the New Novels. To put it in Sanz Villanueva's words:

Hay ecos en *El mismo mar* del gusto experimental y, desde luego, la complejidad de su construcción y de su estilo sólo son viables después de la narrativa "novísima". Pero una actitud radicalmente distinta respecto de la fábula la separa de esta tendencia. Los novelistas surgidos en las proximidades de 1970 eran devotos de un relato de completa inanidad argumental. Tusquets parte, en cambio, de un deseo de referir sucesos ocurridos a alguien y de reconstruir la biografía de un personaje al que le han sucedido una serie de vicisitudes que explican su atribulado presente. (Sanz Villanueva 1997: 13)

Let us now turn to analyse a number of meaningful stylistic differences between these authors, observable in the proposed passages, with a view to discern the presence of 'the poetical' in Tusquets's discourse as springing from female subjectivity.

The agent whose perception orients the telling of the events in Tusquets's novels is customarily a woman, no matter whether the book is written in a first person narrative, as is the case of *El mismo mar...*, or through the oscillating focalisation of a number of characters, as in *El amor es un juego solitario* (1979) and *Varada tras el último naufragio* (1980). It is not coincidental, therefore, that all three novels in Tusquets's trilogy begin with a well-defined human action carried out by a female

character: “Cruzo la puerta de hierro y cristal” in *El mismo mar...* (Tusquets 1978: 7); Elia’s reading activity as the outset of *El amor es un juego solitario* (Tusquets 1979: 7-11) or the opening lines of *Varada...* “Apoya la cabeza de lado sobre la toalla” (Tusquets 1980: 7). Identity and human presence are established from the outset as originating directly from a female character, which will inevitably have a bearing on the degree of subjectivity infused in all descriptions and accounts that constitute the novel. The characteristic abundance of free indirect discourse markers such as dialectical features, recapitulatory tags after a prolonged digression, or certain lexical choices are all indicative of this subjective focaliser. This feature lies in sharp contrast with the degree of subjectivity in Benet’s passage. Human presence and actions are, indeed, extremely sparse in the first section of *Volverás a Región*, with the figure of colonel Gamallo appearing as late as page fifty-five. Presented through the prism of a phantasmagoric narrator, the action seems to develop in a milieu where human presence is absurd and unwelcome, almost like an error of nature. The degree of subjectivity in both texts is therefore markedly disparate.

The question inevitably ensues as to what makes the inscription of the narrators’ subjectivity in Tusquets’s novels lyrical, for it has become a commonplace for critics of Tusquets to refer to her style as replete with lyrical imagery and a ubiquitous poetical tone (Bellver 1987: 25; Ichiishi 1994: 23; Sanz Villanueva 1997: 31-32). An examination of the lexical choices in both extracts can serve us to define the mechanisms of poeticity, and, as will emerge later on in this chapter, of entrapment in Tusquetsian discourse.

Both extracts display a similar degree of rhetoricity, lexical richness, and diversity. However, the lexical choices displayed are intrinsically different. In Benet, there is a taste for medium to highly technical nouns (*higrómetro, atmósfera, evaporación, calina, cationes*), which is a pervasive trait in Benetian style. In Tusquets, there is lexical inclination toward fantastic imagery (*el gris de las aguas, ríos de luz esmeralda, tesoros, maravilla de cajas candarache*). In general, Benet’s text aims at the factual, semi-scientific depiction of an extraordinary landscape or situation, whereas Tusquets’s lexical choices seem to point at an imaginative, alternative reality underlying the ordinariness of the object described (a stationery shop). This might be

extrapolated to our general appreciation of both works as a whole. *Volverás a Región* could be interpreted as a punctilious depiction of a “realidad enrarecida” (Martínez Torrón 1980: 25), whose degree of verbal accuracy seems to add up to the overall sordidness of the referent. This trend has been, in fact, pointed out by Robert Spires as Benet’s individual contribution to the innovative techniques of the *Nueva Novela*. In short, whilst the works of Juan Goytisolo, Torrente Ballester, and others point at a complex and encrypted, but nevertheless existent relationship between signifier and signified (Spires in Manteiga, Herzberger, and Compitello 1984: 2), Benet’s novels aim to demonstrate exactly the absence of any decodifiable correspondence between these two dimensions, thus “forcing [the reader] into the open space beyond words and objects where preconscious experiences are stored, an open space he sometimes calls a “zona de sombras”” (Spires in Manteiga, Herzberger, and Compitello 1984: 3).

In the case of the extract from *El mismo mar...*, the situation-landscape described is not of an extraordinary, disquieting nature, but the narrative approach to it is. The narrative voice seems to endeavour to integrate a more important, parallel world made up of enchanting, ‘literary’ appreciations, which appear to originate in her psyche. These poetical appreciations seem to channel into, on the other hand, a kind of fairy-like view of reality observable of course in a number of lexical choices (*mágico triángulo, gruta sombría, de mohosos estantes que desbordan tesoros, universo extraño de círculos imposibles*), and reinforced by the narrator’s insertion of fairy-tale characters in her comparisons (*Blancanieves y los siete enanitos* and *el Príncipe Encantador*). On the other hand, there appears to be an inclination toward a luxurious and purely ornamental vision of her milieu, which often stems from the referent itself (coming from the Barcelonian bourgeoisie, descriptions of the protagonist’s opulent surroundings are rife in the text), but which the narrator applies with equal frequency to utterly unextraordinary and commonplace objects.

Both these discursive tendencies (the magic and the luxurious) have a characteristic in common: they both signal a predilection towards a contorted, factitious, ultimately fake vision of reality, which the narrator seems to implement, one would say automatically, to the world around her. The implications of these tendencies will not

be dealt with in this section. Suffice it to say, at this stage, that this tendency has a traceable bearing on style, as I have just tried to demonstrate, and that it is particularly representative of the mental mechanisms of Tusquets's women.

There is a further stylistic trait that the present textual comparison between Tusquets and Benet may also bring to our attention, namely the degree of colloquialism in the former. In general, Tusquets's text displays a number of colloquial traces, a trait of which Benet's is ruthlessly devoid: *un poquito bobo, niñitos rubios, perritos de lujo [...] no muy listos*. A great deal of this colloquial tone is achieved by the insertion of what have been elsewhere classified as typically feminine discursive strategies in Spanish, such as the use of diminutives and superlatives (García Moutón 1999; López García and Morant 1991). Elena Gascón Vera has seen this characteristic of Tusquets's style, which acquires a greater dimension in her most recent works *Con la miel en los labios* and *Correspondencia privada*, as evidence towards an understanding of Tusquets's style as pre-eminently feminine, and what is more, as convergent with the tenets of French *écriture féminine*:

También el uso de la lengua y del estilo de Tusquets coincide con la idea de escritura femenina francesa. Sin dejar de utilizar un discurso intimista e introspectivo que expresa abiertamente su sensibilidad femenina, Tusquets escribe sin abstracciones y sin símbolos, con un estilo directo y familiar lleno de coloquialismos, de modismos lingüísticos y culturales que recuerdan al discurso poético de Wittig y que reflejan su momento histórico y social, a la par que dan una riqueza y una espontaneidad a su escritura. (Gascón Vera 1992: 76)

This statement is, I find, highly misleading of Tusquets's style, which makes use of colloquialisms to a noticeable, but limited extent. The inclination towards morphosyntactical complexity in her style (in most cases leading towards prolonged opacity) overrules the former trait and relegates it to an almost anecdotal status. Thus, defining Tusquetsian discourse as an articulation of a direct style which creates a sense of familiarity in the reader is to overstate some of its punctual features. Similarly, assigning to it a sense of spontaneity can be equally inaccurate. In my view, Gascón Vera falls victim here to the kind of unfounded expectations created around Tusquets's work whereby, with a view to place it as squarely as possible under a prescribed category (*écriture féminine*), some features are enhanced or

infused with values alien to their original purpose. As I will be arguing in the following section, Tusquets's style cannot be said to partake of semantic, or indeed, syntactic spontaneity produced *ad libitum*, a feature which in my opinion, should deter us from categorising it as *écriture féminine*.

### 3.2 Esther Tusquets and *Écriture Féminine*

The concept of *écriture féminine* is a predominantly stylistic one. It announces the potential means for verbalisation of a number of intrinsically feminine experiences which relate back to, primarily, a woman's body and its influence on her life and, secondly, all facets of feminine perception, informed by the primal mother-daughter bond. These two poles (the body and the ascendancy of motherhood, viewed both as foundation and end) constitute the two pillars according to which a mighty feminine specificity can be erected, bolstered by their particular situation as oppressed. Synergetically, the biological specificity and the sociological position of women as oppressed converge in the recognition of a distinctively feminine experience, which feminist writers and theoreticians alike have been endeavouring to articulate with great zeal since the late sixties.

The body as a source for feminine specificity has been propounded by several theoreticians and writers now, generally working within the framework of French feminism (Irigaray 1974; Cixous 1975; Chawaf 1976; Gagnon 1977). In general, they argue that by letting their bodies speak without mediation, that is, by articulating a verbal exploration (interrogation and ultimate liberation) of their physicality, women writers may arrive at a sort of "generolecto" (Guerra-Cunningham 1995: 26) whereby images of their own bodies flow profusely (the concept of fluidity is, in fact, central to this theoretical proposal, as it symbolises many of the specifically female bodily functions). This new literary mode embodies a purposeful strategy, aimed at the representation of female bodies as free from clichéd images. As is corrosively summarised in Chantal Chawaf's words: "I feel the political fecundity of mucus, milk, sperm, secretions which gush out to liberate energies and give them back to the world." (Chawaf 1976, in Marks and de Courtivron 1981: 178)

The importance of the mother-daughter bond in a woman's development of her own identity has been a major advance in feminist psychoanalytic theory (of which

Nancy Chodorov's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) is a pivotal work). This sector of psychoanalysis aims to explicate the idea that women's development as full individuals follows a distinct pattern to that of men, owing to the prolonged duration of the mother-daughter connection. In short, this theory states that mothers experience a long-lasting pre-oedipal bond with their daughters, ultimately favoured by the lack of the incest-taboo menace, which delays the latter's evolution towards full individuation. As a consequence, women's vital experiences may be informed by a principle dramatically different from that of men, namely, that a great deal of their sense of self-determination is highly dependent on their relationships with other human beings and of the extent to which these remain successful.

Both of these developments in our general understanding of the female psyche have become a virtually inexhaustible source for an expressly feminine subject matter, as more and more literary works are analysed as a fictional embracement of the psychoanalytic and feminist concepts outlined above. However the concept of *écriture féminine* remains a pre-eminently stylistic one, and it is in this feature that its problematic essence lies, for it addresses the possible ways in which these themes can be turned into distinctively feminine literary forms.

The characteristics of these forms continue to be a matter for debate, as, in essence, they do not significantly depart from the literary styles informed by a certain playful experimentalism, a pleasurable probing into the language based on the distension of its elements at all levels of analysis (lexical, syntactical, symbolic). Julia Kristeva talks about the raw material for this style, which has been grasped and processed by numerous (male) writers:<sup>10</sup>

For at least a century, the literary avant-garde (from Mallarmé and Lautréamont to Joyce and Artaud) has been introducing ruptures, blank spaces, and holes into language. It is what Mallarmé called "the music in letters": Masdoror's explosive *Chants* or the multiplied condensation of myths, philosophy, history, and verbal experience in *Finnegan's Wake*. All of these modifications in the linguistic fabric are the sign of a force that has not been grasped by the linguistic or ideological system. (Kristeva 1974, in Marks and de Courtivron 1980: 165)

The concept of *écriture féminine* is indeed the grasping of this textual *jouissance* (Kristeva 1974, in Marks and de Courtivron: 165), understood in subversive, political

terms. Even though, as Hélène Cixous has also suggested, this kind of writing is potentially accessible to both sexes, it is women who can apprehend it most effectively, in order to, on the one hand, destabilise the patriarchal mechanisms underlying language and, on the other, inscribe their difference and their particular feminine experience. The words of Kristeva are again crucial for our understanding of the disruptive potential of this writing in the feminine and of its features:

In a culture where the speaking subjects are conceived of as masters of their speech, they have what is called a “phallic” position. The fragmentation of language in a text calls into question the very posture of this mastery. The writing that we have been discussing confronts this phallic position either to traverse it or to deny it. (Kristeva 1974: 165)

Thus, a definition could be advanced as to the essential qualities of this theoretical concept, namely a mode of experimental, non-standard literary style that aims at the disruption of language as we know it (motivated by the writer’s belief that language is indeed a cultural construct mirroring a patriarchal, oppressive society). Formally, this style makes extensive use of syntactic fragmentation and semantic discomfiture, with a view to call into question the concepts of discursive rationality, logic, or linearity (all understood as characteristically masculine, and therefore, partial). Taking this definition as a starting point, let us look at how the writing of Esther Tusquets has often been studied as an embodiment of *écriture féminine*.

As has been stated in previous sections, the work of Esther Tusquets has been customarily appraised as intrinsically feminist in its subject matter and feminine in its style. In tune with this trend is the work of Barbara F. Ichiishi (also the translator of *Para no volver* into English). Her book *The Apple of Earthly Love: Female Development in Esther Tusquets* engages the reader in a penetrating analysis of Tusquets’s four novels published up to that date, which together have been at times considered a tetralogy (Dolgin 1988: 399). In a kind of playful academic discourse full of lyrical statements, Ichiishi approaches Tusquets’s novels granting equal attention to both themes and forms, a *modus operandi* which undoubtedly fortifies her position, namely that there is a palpable relationship between style in Tusquets and the representation of a distinctively feminine voice.

---

<sup>10</sup> For a critique of Kristeva’s discussion of a feminine, poetic language as tellingly bereft of any

Ichiishi establishes a direct link between “the intimate world of the body” (Ichiishi 1994: 221) and language in Tusquets’s works. On several occasions in her book, the connection is made between a woman’s sense of corporeal overflow and Tusquets’s long, meandering sentences, which certainly defy all prescribed notions of syntactic limitations. Similarly, style is also likened to a sort of pleasurable recreation, a kind of liberating, unconstrained linguistic play, akin to female multilayered sexuality. Let us look for instance, at the following words by Ichiishi, where these pulsions are amalgamated with the aforementioned female want of matrilineal roots, in order to substantiate Tusquets’s stylistic choices:

The interminable sentences, within larger periods, consist of unending chains of signifiers expressing the metonymic flow of desire which seeks to fuse mother and daughter, past and present in one great wave of love. The movement of the text is not a forward linear progression, but rather a continual doubling back on itself which expresses the pleasure in prolonged appetite and arousal characteristic of female libidinal life. (Ichiishi 1994: 82)

On numerous occasions, Ichiishi argues for a transparent linkage between female body and style, as well as the direct bearing of the female tendency toward emotional bonding (originating at her primal bonding with the mother) with textual configuration. The importance of her study lies, I believe, in that she has propounded this connection, which is problematic in itself, but which other critics have either taken for granted or eluded:

It is through narrative structure and voice that texts adumbrate a distinctive psychic makeup and developmental path for women. [...] Each work expresses the profound desire for love from the mother and lover. This desire is rendered on the formal level through the circular pattern of the texts, the repetitive elements linking past and present, the break-up of chronological time to make the protagonist’s emotional life the organizing principle of the narration. (Ichiishi 1994: 20)

In general, she advances an analysis of Tusquets’s novels as fully compliant with the maxims of *écriture féminine* (Ichiishi 1994: 20, 39, 81) both at the level of content, with Tusquets’s thematic engagement with issues on female sexuality and the motherly bond, and at the formal level, with Tusquets’s style as a creative embodiment of female nature, transformed into a spontaneous, instinctual outpouring

---

female “practitioner” see Grosz 1989.



of forms which serve simultaneously to liberate the narrative voice and assist women out of the historical silence to which they have been relegated.

There is a passage in *El mismo mar...* (resonating again in *El amor es un juego solitario*, and prompted by a similar fictional context), which, critics seem to have agreed, offers more than a reasonable justification for the classification of Tusquets's style as a manifestation of *écriture féminine*. Let us see what these passages are:

Estoy aquí –desvalida y desnuda como nunca lo estuve en el pasado- ni siquiera en el más remoto e íntimo de los pasados jamás contados –deshaciéndome en palabras, palabras que Clara no podría seguramente entender –ni que estuviera atenta y despierta, en lugar de languidecer medio dormida entre mis brazos– y que desde luego no escucha, palabras que tal vez intuí yo hace tiempo para una Guiomar niña –que quizás adiviné cuando ella dormía [...] palabras que estuve a punto de iniciar algunas veces cuando la pequeña se dormía en el suelo o sobre un sofá y había que llevarla dormida hasta la cuna, pero que no le dije, que no llegaron a brotar nunca, y que no formulé siquiera en pensamiento, y es que este lenguaje no nace en el pensamiento y pasa desde allí hasta la voz hecho sonido: nace hecho ya voz de las entrañas y la mente lo escucha ajena y sorprendida. (Tusquets 1978: 158)

A similar situation takes place in *El amor...*, where the two female characters engage in a one-off moment of extreme tenderness and emotional surrender, arguably the only true love scene in this novel of 'desamor':

Y están juntas así, inmóviles y en silencio, muchísimo tiempo, y Clara no sabe cuál de las dos se ha movido primero, pero lo cierto es que luego están las dos firmemente abrazadas, frente a frente, con las piernas entrelazadas, mecidos los dos cuerpos en el ritmo suave que Elia, al volver a hablar, va creando con sus palabras, acunadas las dos por estas palabras dulcísimas que le brotan secretas y terribles a una Elia que Clara todavía no conoce, pero a la que acaso ha podido en sueños intuir, una Elia en cualquier caso de la que ni el marido ni los amantes ni mucho menos Ricardo han podido nunca saber nada. (Tusquets 1979: 103-104)

Both passages seem to point at the existence of a primal linguistic redoubt accessible to women, once they have achieved a state of semi-consciousness (there is in both texts a similar oneiric quality permeating the scene) and emotional fragility (only reachable when both protagonists have lowered their guards and entered a fully amorous and compassionate dimension). Significantly, these passages signal the only moments in both novels where the Elias' (elsewhere manipulative, especially in the second novel), are presented in a radically different light, namely, as equally frail and vulnerable beings, open to a dramatic transformation of the values and imposed conventions that have shattered their illusions. In these passages, we are made privy

to love's truly subversive potential and to the perspective of a distinct mode of expression, whereby personal priorities are upset and redirected towards the other, a language that emerges intact and unaffected by the mechanisms of rationality or self-interest, from a true human ability to love unconditionally (it is easy, at this point, to visualise the connection between this vision of love and the motherly experience). Many critics have established a connection between passages like those above and Tusquets's conscious incorporation of those theories about *le sémiotique* coming from the French philosopher Julia Kristeva, a theory that points at the existence of a language previous to any form of acquired verbality. Let us see, for instance, Servodidio's examination of this passage:

Crooning, cradling and rocking Clara with infinite tenderness and transport, the heroine arrives at a state approximating symbiosis as she becomes mother-lover herself. The impossibility of language to encompass this union is further certification of a regression to what Kristeva defines as pre-verbal, semiotic space prior to entry in a symbolic order. [...] In this episode the rejection of socio-symbolic codes is conveyed in an intonational, alternate language in which the narrator 'writes the body'. Calling upon 'strange' hidden words, inscribed in her anatomy and never uttered to 'any man', she communicates in a vocabulary of love that stands outside male discourse. (Servodidio 1987: 164)

This analysis is amply seconded in the literature about Tusquets (Gascón Vera 1992: 75; Hart 1991: 94-95; 1992: 71; Nichols 1992: 88; Tsuchiya 1992: 190; Jones 1992: 60; Ichiishi 1994: 79). Whether or not the author is indeed aware of the theoretical apparatus on feminine writing coming from France, the truth is there are no real arguments for establishing a parallel connection between this awareness and her style. A further look at the passages above may show that the characteristics of her style (protracted parataxis, lyrical lexical choices based on the magical and the luxurious) are also present there, with neither attenuation nor intensification of its features. There is no 'writing the body', as Servodidio has suggested (a category that has become almost axiomatic amongst certain critics), no lexical choices that may give us any clue as to what these "palabras increíbles, palabras que no he dicho nunca a ningún hombre" (138) may be. Style continues to be, in these passages as in the rest of the novels, complex but meticulously well-structured, poetical and literary. It is my contention that, while the situation depicted in these passages functions as a persuasive and effective fictional device towards the interpretation of love as truly

subversive, the fact that style does not accompany any real substantiation of this fictional possibility can be taken as an anticipation of the final self-desertion Tusquets's characters will execute. In other words, Tusquets's characters do experience, at some point in their lives, a glimpse of discursive breakage from those ties that chain them to an existence of inanition, but because they are trapped in a more overpowering, ubiquitous discourse of fallacious principles (and this is where the Tusquetsian equation "fallacy/literariness" comes into play), which manifests itself every time they try to create a discourse anew, these women will eventually regress, in sheer exhaustion, to the state of powerlessness for which they consciously opt.

This hypothesis discards those views on Tusquets's style as cathartic, a quality which has been attributed not only to her narrative discourse but to feminine narrative in general (Dolgin 1987: 404; Perriam 2000: 63). In general, and in partial relation to the Benetian theory of style as a key possession, a gifted tool the author uses in order to probe into the most obscure territories of his psyche, Tusquets's style has been also studied as significantly functional. Slanted towards the articulation of the female self, a category which Stacey Dolgin has described as "artistically unrepresentable" (Dolgin 2001: 47), style in Tusquets has been interpreted as a medium of self-enquiry and examination, with which her characters may arrive at a further and alleviative understanding of themselves. Style as a tool in Tusquets's novels becomes the best gauge of female emancipation from their past and their problematised psyche, hence its markedly "liberational" function (Tsuchiya 1992: 192). This is the thesis of much academic work on Tusquets, where style is approached as an instrument for liberation:

*El mismo mar* da voz a un agobio emocional en tono monologante porque la autoindagación posee una virtud liberadora. Tras la confesión, Elia se queda en paz, o casi, según ella misma declara. (Sanz Villanueva 1997: 28)

The linguistic play which overflows the pages of *El mismo mar*... is both pleasurable and profoundly liberating: words provide the medium to lighten the heavy emotional weight the woman must bear. (Ichiishi 1994: 69)

I will argue, however, that the transformative capacity underlying Tusquets's narrative style is indeed limited, as it springs from a consciousness impaired *a priori*.

Style is not a liberating presence in her novels, but an absolute presence embodying the very mechanisms of entrapment from which her characters speak. There are countless references in Tusquets's novels to the literary as enclosure, that is, as a site for limited action, where artificial barriers impede individuals from natural, authentic, unselfconscious movements. Many critics have already exposed this feature of Tusquets's opus, usually with a view to ultimately questioning the (feminist) validity of her plots. For instance, Rosalía Cornejo-Parriego's study sets out to evince the connection between textual characteristics and identity, so powerful in *El mismo mar...*, by arguing that "el objetivo de *El mismo mar...* es exponer la esencial teatralidad de toda identidad" (Cornejo-Parriego 1995: 56). However, her conclusion finally broaches the issue of lesbian identity and how this is damaged by Tusquets's characters' recurrent final choice, that is, to step back into the rhetorics of entrapment and refuse to create a real site for social and individual transformation:

Ciertamente es de lamentar que, a pesar de la frecuencia con que Tusquets explora las relaciones lesbianas en sus obras, no haya sido capaz, hasta el momento, de ofrecer un espacio real y factible al lesbianismo o de considerarlo una verdadera opción. (Cornejo-Parriego 1995: 59)

Such doctrinaire precepts should not be brought into play when analysing a fictional work on its own premises. I am not concomitantly dismissing the real potential for dissatisfaction or ultimate disillusionment experienced by the readers of Tusquets who, motivated by the set of expectations created around the (hasty) classifications of her works as feminist, reach the final denouement only to find her characters' betrayal of anything feminist. Elia's experience of pleasure when being raped by her husband in one of the final passages of *El mismo mar...* has, in fact, been considered by some critics as the greatest betrayal of all (Levine 1987: 221). However, this should not be put forward as grounds for Tusquets's novels being ultimately any less valid or powerful. In truth, when appraised within the network of social, cultural, historical and indeed, autobiographical values that inform them, they prove to be an all-coherent representation of the real limitations exerted upon women. Style, as I will argue in the next section, is a crucial contribution to this coherence, as it rounds out the sense of entrapment by simultaneously originating at a level of analysis different from the purely fictional.

### 3.3 Love is a Literary Game: The Literary and the Fake in Tusquets's Novels

In an interview with Stacey Dolgin, Esther Tusquets established the connection between her theories of love and the amorous scenarios of her novels. Amongst numerous references to her notions of love as an ultimately solitary experience where both parties may never meet, she seems to attach a kind of farcical, distorted quality to it: "Es un montaje muy artificioso el amor... el amor como lo entiendo yo en mis libros" (Dolgin 1988: 402). In effect, love is in Tusquets's opus the epicentral source from which her fiction arises. Her characters, usually middle-aged women experiencing different forms of marital breakdown (though also young students of varying ages and social backgrounds), have built their lives according to a number of preconceived romantic ideals which they have endeavoured to reproduce in their existence, invariably to no avail. This kind of love which eventually proves unattainable for all of them, finds its basis in the principles of permanence, mutual protection, and all-pervading passion, ultimately betrayed either by the other or by themselves. Even though Tusquets's fictional world seems to comprise both this kind of fixed patterns of failure and emotional fragmentation on the one hand, and a glimpse of the fissures and the means through which these characters could undermine its apparent immovability, on the other, Tusquets's women always seem to opt for the resigned acknowledgement that everything (their illusions and their expectations, their sentiments and their pain) is, after all, a literary game.

There are numerous traces of this gradual realisation in Tusquets's novels. Sometimes it operates from the outset and informs the whole of her characters' actions, as in the case of Elia in *El amor...*, a woman weary of the world and of human relationships, who is indeed not trying to identify any route out, but who is simply playing according to the rules. In the game of love she engages in, and where she apparently features as the pivotal element, there seems to be an overtly influential guiding code, informed by a number of easily identifiable patterns affecting the participants' encounters. These patterns can be interpreted as purely ornamental, a decorative device with which to disguise the all-embracing solitude of the

protagonists' lives. The identification of these patterns as a literary, false recreation is made explicit at several points in the novel.

The sordid affair unfolding between Elia and Ricardo is itself inspired by Elia's vague remembrance of a reading activity. The recollection of a bookish scene she read as a child, of female and male apes engaging in odour-based games of courtship, serves as a catalyst for her own affair, thereby establishing a very blurry distinction between literature (that is, what is by definition fanciful, over-imaginative or unreal) and "la realidad social y ciudadana" (Tusquets 1979: 14). And the memory of a scene which Elia herself describes as "edulcorada y equívoca" (Tusquets 1979: 11) will prompt a relationship replete with equally cloying, but nevertheless dangerous qualities:

Elia sentía que algo estaba moviéndosele muy adentro, en lo más hondo, entre mares de hastío y desencanto y remotos recuerdos de lecturas infantiles, el recuerdo de cierta novela de aventuras donde se hablaba del aroma, o quizá del hedor, que despiden los sexos de las hembras en celo, y de cómo los machos, qué locura, sin apenas conocerlas todavía –no hay otro conocimiento que el aroma–, las eligen, las separan y las cercan incansables para las oscuras frondas del deseo. (Tusquets 1979: 14)

The scene of their first meeting is a highly representative passage for the interpretation of the protagonist's perceptions as informed by literature. In effect, parallel to the very prolonged interventions by Ricardo, where he tries to present himself in depth as the most suitable of lovers, there develops Elia's own analysis of the situation, an analysis resembling a critical commentary of a literary text. Her impressions are gathered in the following (summarised) passage:

Y lo que inicia Ricardo [...] es un autoanálisis minucioso y agudo y hasta inteligente, [...]: porque ahí aparece todo, lecturas, crisis místico-religiosas, primera experiencia homosexual [...] breve –muy breve, se subraya– discurrir por el marxismo, y luego la maduración estética y moral, más estética que moral, se puntualiza, aunque en realidad las dos pueden ser quizás una misma cosa, y Elia piensa que ha sido todo el discurso –que ahora por último parece tocar a su fin– como una curiosa mezcla de ensayo psicológico y poema intimista, sí, como un ensayo o un poema, algo elaborado y esquemático, que se mueve más que entre realidades entre valores simbólicos [...] (Tusquets 1979: 24-25)

At no point in his intervention is Ricardo any closer to exposing his truth, nor is Elia willing to exhibit hers, even though she appears to be entirely capable of recognising the mechanisms of fallacy, the overwhelming frequency with which "se escamotea tras las sinceridades la verdad" (Tusquets 1979: 25). And thus their relationship

develops knowingly as a grotesque, theatrical enactment of what is described as a literary love, that is, a fabricated device with which to play only momentarily and before the devastating vision of their solitude will reappear in all its dimension. The settings for their love are accordingly selected amongst the most indelicately stereotypical, such as the room for their first sexual encounter, of which it is said “no puede existir habitación más literaria que este falso decorado, todo él purpurina y cartón piedra” (Tusquets 1979: 72). Their love is also artificially and previously delimited by themselves, in the tacit recognition of its dubious steadiness:

pero insiste el poeta y le arranca por fin la promesa de que su amor durará como mínimo hasta septiembre, sería atroz que ella le abandonara antes de septiembre [...] Y piensa Elia que esta aventura artificiosa y bella, tan literaria, tendrá que seguir siendo artificiosa y bella y literaria hasta su final [...] (Tusquets 1979: 77)

The faint division between life and literature will also constitute a leitmotiv in Tusquets's *Varada tras el último naufragio*, though in this case, the characters are not engaged in a flirtatious game of grotesquerie where everything is lost from the beginning, but faced with the ultimate consequences of having lived their life as if it was literature. Tusquets's novel is, on this occasion, replete with references to this literary view of life as culturally induced, and solidly ingrained in all its female characters (predominantly Elia, the protagonist). The reader can but witness the swiftness with which all these characters' former convictions about love, friendship and emotional welfare, fall apart before their eyes.

Elia has been abandoned by her husband Jorge, who claims not to love her anymore. Speaking from the throes of a severe crisis, Elia spends her time during the summer vacation reminiscing, benumbed, about her relationship with him, trying to figure out the possible reasons for such an unexpected end. As this process develops, two parallel plots are interpolated, which tell of the imminent marital breakdown of Elia's friends and fellow holidaymakers, Eva and Pablo, and of the secret love that Clara, Eva's temporary protégée, feels for her. Without becoming enmeshed with one another, all three stories signal the fragility of love when it is constructed upon the ongoing idealisation of one lover by the other, a self-destructive process which leaves these women weary, weak, and unable to confront reality in the end.

There are, as in *El amor...*, numerous references to literature as the negative force distorting these characters' views of love. Further, the adjective 'literary' is here used to indicate falsehood and obstructive exaggeration, such as the one called upon by characters when attempting to analyse their own situation (or when criticising others'). Thus, in moments of self-deprecating lucidness, Elia conceives of her present situation as a *recherché* literary figure which she cannot fully communicate to others without embarrassment:

¿cómo contarle a Eva, cómo contarle a nadie, ni siquiera a Miguel, sin que suene terriblemente falso, grotescamente rebuscado y pedante y literario, que el tiempo se le quedó de pronto, en un instante de los últimos días o de las últimas semanas que ella no es capaz de precisar, estático e inmóvil y achatado, y que ella navega por él —como por la mar— sin alterar la superficie [...] (Tusquets 1980: 29)

This “exceso de literatura” (Tusquets 1980: 34) impinges on the character's perceptions, giving rise to a parallel reality that she recreates in her mind. Elia's understanding of reality is impaired by her literary ruminations as to what could have happened or what could indeed be happening at the moment of narration. Her imagination, informed by a number of literary clichés, tries to create a series of images that could relieve her from the ordinariness of her present situation. In the following passage, for instance, Elia arrives at a fair grasp of reality only after having previously fantasised about it (and note here the contrast between the specific lexical choices relating to a magical, alternative reality and the sudden colloquialness when turning to the real situation):

sólo entonces sabe Elia que no se trata de unos instantes mágicos creados para ella o para otros por la mañana luminosa, el mar azul, una muchacha emblemática, parte integrante de una alegoría, sino de algo muy concreto y real, de que Pablo ha ligado en la playa con una muchacha desconocida [...] (Tusquets 1980: 148-149)

This circuitous way of understanding life, which she identifies as “ese modo suyo literario y excesivo de entender la vida” (221) has brought her to this present state of trauma. Not having perceived the several signs of deterioration in her relationship with Jorge, engulfed as she was in her own infatuation, she is now faced with a shocking reality of forced independence which she does not know how to tackle. Style in the novel functions as formal corroboration of her literary mind, the kind of illusory poetic mechanisms which delay her realistic perceptions in some cases, and



completely obstruct them in others. And in the same way that peripheral characters are described as “grandilocuente[s] y literario[s], difícilmente convincente[s]” (160), the scenarios for action as “artificioso[s] y literario[s]” (188), and Elia herself as “borracha de literatura” (184), style itself develops according to the literary principles of hyperbole and metaphoric evasion, whereby self-revelation is, in fact, suspended until the end, when the female protagonist experiences a glimpse of emotional freedom, also accompanied by a change in style. Let us examine this evolution in detail, which is manifest in *Varada...* (given its protagonist’s final breakage from the bonds of literary discourse), but which is, nevertheless, present in most of Tusquets’s novels.

As Geraldine C. Nichols stated in her structuralist analysis of *El mismo mar...* (1992), the reader is offered “un texto deliberadamente literario” (Nichols 1992: 93). As also emerged from our exercise on textual comparison between Tusquets and Benet, Tusquets’s style constantly appeals to the poetic force of words and structures, in order to create an alternative network of perceptions unfolding parallel to the action being told.

One of the strongly pervading literary forces informing Tusquets’s characters’ perceptions and, as I will argue, her style, is their penchant for hyperbole and exaggeration. In the passage below, for instance, Clara in *Varada...* articulates her love for Eva in absolute terms, making use of a variety of lexical choices that recreate the presence of both natural and supernatural elements:

Y yo soy su fracaso, se repite Clara con un peso intolerable en el pecho y la garganta seca y la boca amarga, porque no hay nada que no estuviera dispuesta yo a hacer por ella, suya desde que la conocí, suya con todo lo que soy, desde las puntas del cabello hasta las uñas de los pies, y si ella me dijera vuela yo saltaría al vacío y el vacío me sostendría, y si ella me dijera ven, yo andaré sobre las aguas y soportaré mi peso el mar, y si me pidiera los volcanes, las estrellas, los corales, yo iré a buscármelos y se los conseguiré, y no soy ya más que un anhelo de ella, no existo más que en este amor disparatado, y me gustaría poder convertirme a mí misma en ofrenda y entregarme en un acto único, irreversible, total, envuelta en celofán y al cuello una cintita rosa [...] (Tusquets 1980: 139)

The magnification of sentiments is a constant in all of Tusquets’s characters (a tendency that finds its roots in the author herself, as we will see in our analysis of *Correspondencia privada* below). Style develops as the formal reflection of the character-narrators’ grandiose view of the love they feel, but also as the gauging tool

with which the reader may measure the magnitude of their failure. In other words, there is an observable correlation between the magnificence of their feelings and the pain this emotional exaggeration is eventually going to cause them. Style functions as an accompaniment for this progression, and as an echo of these women's experience of love as virtually indescribable, an event only partly accessible through lyrical approximation. Sanz Villanueva has already pointed out this characteristic in Tusquets's novelistic creations:

Una nota hay que subrayar en el modo de presentar esa situación problemática. Se trata del carácter extremado, agónico de sus permanentes desgarrones interiores [...] Elia se inclina sin respiro a una múltiple hipérbole: de las emociones, de las impresiones recibidas del mundo y de la descripción de las inquietudes psicológicas. [...] Estos rasgos no son gratuitos, sino la consecuencia de un modo de concebir el amor por parte de los personajes como una aspiración a una realidad totalizante, distinta, intransferible y casi inefable. (Sanz Villanueva 1997: 22-23)

Metaphor constitutes a further means for perceptual distantiating in Tusquets's characters. Reality is repeatedly apprehended through the prism of metaphoric suggestion, which expands the gap between factual and subjective evidence of their emotional situation. Metaphors are frequently a recurrent resort for mental evasion when this has proved hurtful and traumatic. In the following passage from *El mismo mar...*, where Elia tells of her husband's return and of their troubling sexual encounter which will put an end (possibly only momentarily) to his abandonment, the reader is made privy to Elia's perceptual detachment from the reality of a rape-like intrusion. This detachment is articulated through metaphoric reference to the elements involved:

y en esta película que definitivamente no me interesa ni me creo, el *hombre coleccionista* me manipula, me maneja, me dispone en posturas distintas como a una muñeca bien articulada: [...] tendida de espaldas, los ojos fijos en el techo blanco, su cuerpo pesando sobre el mío, sus brazos y sus piernas aferrándose en *el cepo mortal*, y no es posible ni volar, ni caminar sobre el mar, no es posible siquiera ya moverme, y entonces, en una embestida brutal, su sexo me traspasa como un alfiler al rojo vivo, no como una bola de fuego, que atraviesa certera *el aro*, como una flecha que se clava en el centro preciso de la diana sin que haya necesitado *el arquero* ni ojos ni manos [...] y [...] yo una pobre mariposa agonizante, una pobre mariposa enfurecida [...] que no puede siquiera agitar las alas, mientras en golpes rudos, sucesivamente acelerados, seguros y rítmicos, la van clavando para siempre una vez más en el fondo blanquísimo de *la gran caja de cristal*. (Tusquets 1978: 214-215, my emphasis)

This tendency, of which Elena Gascón Vera has said “libera el inconsciente y rompe con la jerarquía de la razón”, thus reaffirming “las características estilísticas del discurso femenino” (Gascón Vera 1992: 67), could be instead interpreted as the narrator’s own entrapment in a world of unrealistic perceptions which manipulate in great measure her response to outer stimuli. To those interpretations of Tusquets’s style as liberating and unbound, truly an embodiment of the feminine subversive capture of those tensions underlying language, with a view to subverting the mechanisms of patriarchal logic, I would oppose an understanding of her stylistic discourse as informed, precisely, by the rhetoric of entrapment. For her style does not exhibit those fragmentations of language Kristeva had put forward as signs of the fissures within the so-called phallic position which women could utilise for its subversion, neither does it present itself as particularly alternative and revolutionary; in fact, as Geraldine Nichols realises: “en 1978, el estilo de Esther Tusquets no era especial” (Nichols 1992: 92). Its verbal complexity never turns to irrational (anti-rational) discourse, mirroring the arcane side of the feminine subconscious, but remains exceptionally well-conducted and structurally coherent. Its intense figurative force signals the narrator’s positioning in life, that is, women enclosed in their own mental slavery, attempting to be the heroines in a battle that was lost from the beginning.

Tusquets’s women’s female voice is, thus, constantly barred from authenticity, always speaking through their sense of impotence in the light of the all-pervading forces that direct their lives into final impassivity. However, I would like to propose an analysis of Elia’s concluding interior monologue in *Varada...* as offering a glimpse of discursive breakage from these ties. Such a reading of Tusquets’s third novel is not a novel one. Geraldine Nichols has argued, for instance, that: “*Varada tras el último naufragio* provides a significant departure from the pattern of closure, since at the end Elia says she is happy and seems resolved not to return to the “romantic thralldom” of her marriage” (Nichols 1993: 170). Nichols’s brief analysis of breakage in this novel remains, however, a thematic one and does not address what I believe is the crucial sign of liberation in the novel, namely stylistic breakage.

In the course of this twenty-one-page passage, Elia unravels her innermost convictions through a mode of unmediated speech springing from her, at last, lucid state of mind. Formally, her experience of emotional breakdown, temporary inanition, and final acceptance of her situation, is valorised by means of an uninterrupted dialogue addressed to her son, where punctuation and any other major form of syntactic structuration, such as discourse connectives, disappear. In this passage, Elia appears to have come to terms with those mental mechanisms and idealisms that oppressed her, simultaneously shedding light on her views on life, love, and literature. When she speaks about these as the overruling presences in her life, her speech becomes intensely revealing. As formal means of contrivance decline, her expression enters into an unceasing flow of self-revelations and disclosure, which progressively assuages her pain and brings her all-embracing respite. Once the mechanisms of entrapment have been identified, Elia is capable of locating her weak spots and the negative influences that provoked her unadvantageous situation. Rather lucidly, she establishes the connection between her being a woman and the kind of self-abnegating, dependent behaviour instilled upon her by society. The change of tone in Elia's voice, from initial hopelessness to this final self-reassuring realisation is, undoubtedly, accompanied by the change in style:

y no tenía sentido seguir como una idiota sentada para nada en el patio de butacas con esa extraña vocación que me nació de pronto de ser piedra o lagarto piedra pulimentada por las olas hasta arrancarle el alma y arrojada a la orilla de la playa lagarto adormecido que se sueña a sí mismo vegetal tronco cubierto de algas postrer residuo enmohecido del último naufragio y ya sé reconozco que es siempre dura amarga triste la pérdida del amor que es siempre doloroso para todos su final y seguramente mucho más para las mujeres tan habituadas tan adiestradas y en eso no soy rara ni excepcional adiestradas y constreñidas y forzadas desde niñas a poner nuestro personal vivir en función de otro y acaso todavía es peor para las mujeres que están empezando como Eva como yo a envejecer [...] (263)

In her most recent publication, *Correspondencia privada* (2001), the connection is adumbrated between her characters' behavioural patterns and Tusquets's own. Scholars have already pointed out this link, by analysing the observable reiteration of themes in Tusquets's literary trajectory as intrinsically connected to her own biography (Ichiishi 1994: 17, 19)

If her previous novels can be said to be inspired by a number of personal experiences (there is, for instance, the ubiquitous presence of the inadequate mother,

a pivotal thematic element in *El mismo mar...*, also present in *El amor...*, *Varada...*, and in various of the stories in *Siete miradas en un mismo paisaje*), *Correspondencia privada* is in itself an autobiographical text. Despite the author's own statement that the four letters compiled in this volume are fictionalised accounts of real events in her life, the truth is that the reader can substract numerous, valuable clues regarding Tusquets's own life trajectory and, furthermore, what elements in her novelistic production were actually biographical. For instance, the connection can safely be established, after having read *Correspondencia privada*, between Elia and Jorge's love story and Tusquets's own relationship with Esteban, whom, as Elia does in *Varada...*, she also calls "mi holandés errante" (Tusquets 1980: 78; Tusquets 2001: 135, 145).

In *Correspondencia privada*, the author looks back on four of the most consequential relationships in her life, namely, the ever-present relationship with her mother,<sup>11</sup> her first love story with her high-school literature teacher, her love affair with Eduardo, a talented young man of ambiguous sexuality and fervent religiosity, and finally, her relationship with Esteban, the father of her two children. Stylistically, this collection of stories in the epistolary form, corroborates the evolution towards formal simplification that Tusquets's more recent novels already revealed, a tendency detected by critics (Ichiishi 1999: 183) and also acknowledged by the author herself in a number of interviews (Nichols 1989: 73; Morgado 2000).<sup>12</sup> Here we see a more tranquil and distended narrative voice. Without having utterly abandoned a series of recognisably Tusquetsian themes, such as the continuous tug-of-war between love and death and human helplessness before the latter's ultimate victory, this new publication incorporates a sharper sense of irony and self-critical awareness, which goes hand in hand with the countless references to her overly literary and melodramatic approach to life. From her description of her literary transition towards *El mismo mar...* as growth out of "mis balbuceos literarios, el almibarado romanticismo remotamente erótico de mis poemas adolescentes y juveniles, para

---

<sup>11</sup> "Carta a mi madre" previously appeared in Laura Freixas's compilation of women-authored short stories entitled *Madres e hijas* (1996).

<sup>12</sup> In this interview published in *The Barcelona Review*, Tusquets confirms this discernible recent tendency in her work: "Mi estilo se vuelve cada vez menos barroco, no sé por qué, voy hacia la simplificación. No sé por qué."

adentrarme de lleno en una aventura lésbica con tanto desparpajo y verosimilitud” (Tusquets 2001: 43), to her self-portrait in those years as “una cursi de mucho cuidado” (Tusquets 2001: 58), or further back in time, as a “burguesita romántica e inconformista” (Tusquets 2001: 101), Tusquets speaks from the position of a woman who has detected, singled out, and finally deserted those behavioural patterns that prevented her from grasping the more realistic side of life. And thus, she acknowledges: “Y en muchas [experiencias] inventé en parte –¿no lo hacemos todos?– el objeto de deseo; fantaseé y distorsioné –a menudo a sabiendas– la escueta realidad” (180), to subsequently profess that “Dejé, para bien y para mal, de literaturizar tanto la vida, la mía y las ajenas, dejé de arroparla, o lo hice en menor grado, en rasgos folletinescos [...]. Dejé de verme como una heroína romántica que vivía historias excepcionales” (181-182). Her style in *Correspondencia privada*, humorous and self-deprecating, at times colloquial in tone and less structurally complex (though Tusquets’s unmistakably protracted syntax continues to be a constant) corresponds to her avowed change in the way she appreciates the world around her:

Y, no obstante, si al otro lado del tupido velo la realidad había perdido brillantez e intensidad de colorido, en contrapartida, lejos de desdibujarse, adquiría contornos más nítidos, líneas más precisas, más exactas, y mi mirada se tornaba más sabia, más cargada de comprensión, más benévola y sobre todo más irónica (me resisto a afirmar que más madura). (182)

With *Correspondencia privada*, undoubtedly her most autobiographical publication to date, Esther Tusquets seems to have granted her opus a marked sense of closure, also affecting her style. Having identified the all-pervading tendency to ‘literaturizar’ reality, a tendency that has been assigned negative connotations with increasing intensity throughout her novelistic production, the author currently looks forward, as she has stated, to a drastic change in her literary tone of yet unpredictable characteristics:

Estoy harta. Sobre todo bastante harta de ser yo. Siempre he sido una escritora que he dado vueltas sobre mi pasado. Pero nunca he contado las cosas como son. Soy exageradamente desmesurada. (Tusquets, in Molina 2001)

### 3.4 Conclusion

I began the present chapter by addressing the question of today's noticeable academic disillusionment with Tusquets's writing, voiced primarily by critics working within the Anglo-American framework. These articles habitually attack the lack of final self-determination in Tusquets's characters, who end up betraying the prospects for a renewed existence, outside the fixed premises of their rhetorical entrapment, usually offered to them by the recurrent figure of the young lesbians who, as Janet N. Gold wrote, "refuse artifice" (Gold 1987: 344). This observable pattern in Tusquets's characters has led some critics to talk of her female protagonists as "immature" (López 1995: 178), and of her novels as "claustrophobic and frustrating" (Biganne 2001: 663), "reiterative and anachronic" (Ortiz Ceberio 2001: 57).

My intention in this study has been to arrive at an understanding of this present sense of disenchantment via stylistic enquiry. Leaving aside the set of argumental expectations created by those academic sectors which catalogued Tusquets's works as undisputably feminist, I have followed the line of thought adumbrated by Gonzalo Navajas in his article 'Repetition and the Rhetoric of Love in Esther Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*' (1987). Stylistic in its methodology, this article discloses the several ways in which Tusquets's discourse reveals her characters' own enclosure in a network of reiterative, regressive patterns. Focusing specifically on stylistic repetition, Navajas links form and content in an illuminating way:

Despite its efforts at differentiation, the discourse of the text is not entirely free from the mechanism of repetition. The text refuses to imitate the non-distinctive language of others but at the same time, to a certain extent, it invalidates its rejection of imitation by imitating its own language. Repetitive constructions and expressions are not infrequent. For example, constructions structured around a serial sequence of nouns with a similar meaning abound in the novel. [...] Thus, in a way that contradicts the main orientation of the text, the discourse in these instances seems to pursue the reiteration of meaning already introduced rather than the creation of a new one. (Navajas 1987: 115)

Though the article above focuses primarily on discursive repetition, its line of argumentation captures the significance of style in Tusquets's works. Captive in their own means of expression, which reveal a strongly literature-laden way of understanding life and love (invariably, to their own detriment), Tusquets's characters seem to function as the fictionalised impersonation of the author's self-

avowed inadequacy to live through certain experiences level-headedly. Similarly, and because this tendency is informed by a number of culturally induced limitations (such as the inability to refuse to entrap themselves in unhappy marriages, or to perceive of different forms of sexuality as potentially triumphant), this type of discourse also anticipates, and, in a way, prepares the reader for, the final betrayal these characters will ultimately perpetuate. In sum, Tusquets's writing, labyrinthine and yet well-structured, lexically lavish and yet repetitive, subversive in plot, and yet predictable, could be taken as an easy target for those sectors of feminist criticism which evaluate a literary work in terms of how adequately it presents "truthful images of strong women with which the reader may identify" (Moi 1985: 7). I believe, however, that, as was advanced in the introduction, such feminist figurations of sociopolitical progress as they are promulgated and practised in the American context are not best suited when applied to literary projects such as that of Tusquets, where fiction does not recount how women succeed in overthrowing patriarchal authority, but rather (and one would add, more meaningfully) how they continue to fail to do so. Joan Wallach-Scott's argument for a gender-aware historical understanding is also pertinent for the practice of feminist literary criticism:

The realization of the radical potential of women's history comes in the writing of histories that focus on women's experiences *and* analyse the ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics. Feminist history then becomes not the recounting of great deeds performed by women but the exposure of the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organization of most societies. (Wallach Scott 1999: 27, emphasis in the original)

My analysis is thus in tune with more accommodating feminist validations of Tusquets's opus such as the one penned by Immaculada Pertusa regarding a more affirmative reading of lesbian love in *El mismo mar...*, and her argument that "reconocer así el fracaso de la relación lesbiana en la novela no como un final, sino como una estrategia de representación, es la forma más apropiada para comprender el sentido lesbiano del texto" (Pertusa 1999-2000: 127). I have proposed an understanding of feminism in Tusquets's novels as more expository than subversive, and simultaneously delineated a link between thematic and stylistic forms of entrapment. The kind of literary style accompanying the literary views shared by both characters and author in Tusquets's novelistic creation is a crucial element for the



understanding of the rhetorical-cultural enclosure from which these women speak. Ultimately, I have analysed this aspect of her narrative as a signifier of unassailable consistency, with a view to counteracting those critical voices that announce that the validity of her work is maimed by an underlying contradiction.

In the following chapter, the very concept of consistency, understood as unbroken continuity of themes and forms in Tusquets's novelistic output, is examined in the light of the English translations of her works. The path of diffusion delineated so far, ostensibly centring on feminist forms of exegesis that are not, as we have seen, without their own pitfalls, will be complicated further by a translated output that enters into dialogue with feminist interpretations, in some cases to contravert them. An overview of the summation of both translational and critical discourses will shed light on the generally overlooked and poorly documented unevenness characterising the Anglo-American reception and dissemination of the authors in hand.

## Chapter 4: Esther Tusquets in Translation: Continuity and Dislocation in the English Translations of her Tetralogy

Critical analysis of the work of Esther Tusquets can be placed within the general academic enthusiasm for peninsular women authors, which has expanded since the mid-eighties and helped to broaden the literary corpus held under scrutiny by Hispanists the world over. This increasing commitment has no doubt informed the dynamics of exchange at the time her works have been translated into English, a commitment which has made her one of the most extensively and keenly translated Spanish woman authors of the Transition. Since the translation into English of *Love is a Solitary Game* was published in 1985, the translations of her other novels have succeeded one another, with the last one, *Never to Return* by Barbara F. Ichiishi being published as recently as 1999. I will offer a brief survey about the translators underwriting each project, where information about them has been obtainable, (the publishing houses of Tusquets's translations were contacted but unable or unwilling to provide substantial information regarding the translations or the translators). This exercise of unearthing, whilst brief, aims to compensate for the almost total absence of information about the translators available in the publications or elsewhere, and springs from my own indebtedness to their work.

*Love is a Solitary Game*, the translation of Tusquets's second novel into English, was published in 1985 and was thus the Catalan author's letter of introduction to the Anglo-American world. Bruce Penman, its translator, is however best known for his long-standing commitment to the translation and general diffusion of Italian Renaissance literature. To date, he has published the most recent translation available of Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* (1825-1826), entitled *The Betrothed* (1972) in English, as well as Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1981). He is also the editor of the volume *Five Italian Renaissance Comedies* (1990) published in the *Penguin Classics* collection. A rather idiosyncratic précis about the translator was included in

*The Betrothed*, itself the only biographical information about Bruce Penman I have been able to locate:

Bruce Penman is a versatile linguist who has a good reading knowledge of ten languages and speaks four of them fluently. He is the export market-research manager of a large industrial firm, and follows the same system for translating books that Trollope used for writing them – a long, regular daily stint before breakfast. His other translations include works of travel and of ancient history, besides seven of the *nouvelle* in the *Penguin Book of Italian Short Stories*. (*The Betrothed*: front page)

In the light of the above bio-bibliographical outline, Bruce Penman's translation of Esther Tusquets's novel is thus an unexpected element in his published output. Further, in contrast with the rest of his publications, where the translated texts are accompanied by introductions and other supplementary editorial material (Penman 1972, 1981), his translation of *El amor es un juego solitario* does not integrate any form of paratextual support. Moving from a translator-oriented to a translation-oriented analytical tack, Penman's *Love is a Solitary Game* also stands in sharp contrast with the rest of the English translations of Tusquets's novels available, for this concrete reason. As we shall see, the absence of paratext in his translation becomes glaring when set side by side with the English editions of *The Same Sea as Every Summer* (1990), *Stranded* (1991), and *Never to Return* (1999), where pertinent introductions and afterwords are included which highlight the author's central role in contemporary Spanish letters and, simultaneously, underscore the translators' presence and project.

The translation of Tusquets's first novel *The Same Sea as Every Summer* came out five years after Penman's, winning the Eugene Kayden National Translation Award, a prestigious award granted by the University of Colorado to an outstanding original translation of a creative or scholarly work, deemed of importance for the Humanities. The translator, Margaret E. J. Jones, is an active Hispanist who has recently published on the work of Esther Tusquets herself (Jones 1992), but whose investigation has consistently centred on Spanish women writers, particularly on those belonging to the *Generación de medio siglo* (Jones 1970; 1974; 1985). More recently, she has published a translation of Ana María Moix's collection of short stories *Las virtudes peligrosas*, entitled *Dangerous Virtues* (1997), which has

consolidated her as one of the principal mediators between Spanish women's narratives and the English-speaking readership.

Susan E. Clark's translation of *Varada tras el último naufragio*, entitled *Stranded* (1991), is perhaps the most unobtrusive of the series due to the almost total lack of information available about the translator or, indeed, the translational project as such. Itself a work of extraordinary prowess, *Stranded* is also a key contribution to the diffusion of Tusquets's novelistic trajectory in the English-speaking world, given the original novel's significance as a point of divergence, away from the dejected resignation in *El mismo mar...* and *El amor...* and towards the timid optimism of *Para no volver* (Tusquets in Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 1991a: 180). However, I have been unable to locate the translator within any academic institution, nor is there any evidence that she has in fact translated any other literary work. Further, the blurb to the English translation provides no bio-bibliographical information about her nor does it make any mention of her undertaking. Susan E. Clark's brief afterword to her translation constitutes, apart from the translated text itself, the only trace of her presence and of her manifest cognisance of Tusquets's work.

The translation of *Para no volver*, *Never to Return* (1999), by Barbara F. Ichiishi confirms the vigour of scholarly interest in Tusquets within Anglo-American academia. It also exemplifies the more revitalising trends in translation publishing and design facilitated by the generalised call for greater self-awareness, which translation scholars and practitioners have been articulating for the past decade. The book, published by The University of Nebraska Press, is part of The European Women Writers Series, which includes Margaret E. W. Jones's translations of Esther Tusquets and Ana María Moix, as well as the two extant translations into English of Rosa Montero's *Crónica del desamor* and *La función Delta*. The diffusion of the work of contemporary Spanish women writers owes a great deal to this collection. Among other translations of such focal European women writers as Hélène Cixous, Marguerite Duras, Anna Banti, or Claudine Herrman, this series includes several translations of Rosa Chacel, Ana María Matute, and Soledad Puértolas. Apart from the translation, *Never to Return* incorporates an afterword and a glossary of "Spanish and Latin American Historical and Cultural Terms" (Ichiishi 1999: 189-191), where

relatively unknown culture-specific items touching on Francoist policies or bull-fighting parlance are made accessible to the reader. Further, a brief outline of the translator's published work is provided on the back cover, including a reference to her monographic volume on Tusquets's work (Ichiishi 1994), and her involvement as the co-translator of Édouard Glissant's play *Monsieur Toussaint*. Ichiishi's *Never to Return* is an exceptional publication, insofar as the translator's commitment to her project of transmission is made visible at all times.

In the present chapter I intend to advance a critical approach to the way the work of Esther Tusquets has been made accessible to an English-speaking readership through the translations of Bruce Penman, Margaret E. W. Jones, Susan E. Clark, and Barbara F. Ichiishi. The study will progressively integrate successive, close readings of the translations, both as multilayered refractions of the original texts' tensions and intentions, and as writings in their own autonomy, with a redesigned agenda to which they both adhere and exemplify. This seemingly stark exercise of textual juxtaposition is, in fact, desirable when attempting to elucidate the translations' own programmatic status.

Very little has been said about the translations of Esther Tusquets into English. Bruce Penman's translation was criticised in passing by Paul Julian Smith, who in his book *Laws of Desire* (1992), casts aspersion on its 'fidelity' to the original's characteristic textuality. In a footnote that briefly comments on the English translations of Tusquets published up to that date, and which is the only instance of a metatextual reference to the translations I have been able to locate, he states:

The first [Margaret E. W. Jones's *The Same Sea as every Summer*] gives an excellent rendering of Tusquets's labyrinthine syntax; the second [Penman's translation] does not respect the Spanish original. (Smith 1992: 91)

The present study begins with the realisation that, after a cursory reading of the translations available, the statement above seems to hold true. My main purpose, needless to say, is to try to render this appreciation more complex. Through a series of analytical readings of the translated texts, the paratext and the packaging surrounding the textual products, I will attempt an examination of the extant translations as integrating components of an organic whole. Further, I will try to put forward an interpretation of Penman's *Love is a Solitary Game* as a striking element

of discontinuity, if not disruption, in the process of transmission and reception of the work of Esther Tusquets by an Anglo-American audience.

The unsettling nature of Penman's text can be located at both a macrolevel and a microlevel of analysis. When analysed in detachment from the subsequent translations, Penman's text exhibits a series of controversial patterns.

First, the scanty attention given to the question of stylistic transposition becomes noticeable. As the main line of argumentation in the previous chapter tried to show, Tusquets's style is inextricably linked to her overall preoccupation with rhetorical enclosure, so prominently characteristic of the women in her novels. This link was defined via stylistic enquiry and intimates the role of Tusquets's writing mode as a reflection of the overly literary minds of her female characters. Her style is therefore pregnant with recurrent literary figures, a notable rhetorical tone and distinctive syntactical structures, all strategies and structures which are not echoed in Penman's text. As I will try to show, the structural manoeuvres to which Bruce Penman resorts in order to facilitate the informational flow, thus giving precedence to the emergence of, primordially, a story line, are ultimately detrimental to the overall interpretation of Tusquets's style as a powerful, functional presence in her opus.

But dislocation in his translation trespasses upon the activity of stylistic transposition, which will be nevertheless granted careful consideration in this chapter. As will be explained, his translation is also at odds with a central element of Tusquets's literary project, namely the preponderance of erotic imagery springing from a woman's angle, an aspect carefully contemplated by the other three translations available. After a detailed exposition of the irregularities encountered regarding this aspect, time will be taken to hypothesise about the underlying motivations and the corollaries of this attitudinal pattern observed in the translation. An analysis of some theoretical quandaries touching on the translator's gender and his/her suitability to translate markedly gendered texts ably will be offered. The conclusions reached in this matter will be better grasped in conjunction with my analysis of the analogous irregularities encountered in the English translations of Rosa Montero.

When studying the paths of interrelation among the four English translations available of Esther Tusquets, a further complication arises. The translations by Margaret E. W. Jones, Susan E. Clark, and Barbara F. Ichiishi can be said to operate in an interconnectional fashion that guarantees a standard of cohesiveness for both the ongoing project of transmission and the stature of Tusquets's novels as, when seen in conjunction, a well-orchestrated and consistent point of reference for the English-speaking audience. The main threads of cohesion among them can be linked to the two main weaknesses observed above regarding Penman's text: their reflective, cognisant consideration of style as a semantically loaded entity in Tusquets's novels and their aiming at a target text that is also conversant with the original's purposeful recreation of a woman-centred universe, polarised by a specifically female sense of corporeality and psychological configuration. Against this interpretation of the 1990, 1991, and 1999 translations as a synergetic whole, Penman's translation stands as a protruding element of disruption. In other words, the international apprehension of Tusquets's novels as interrelated sequential literary output, as 'palimpsestic revisitations' of the same motif (Lee Six 2002: 32), bound by a recognisable stylistic contour, itself a conception promoted and theorised upon persistently by Tusquets's critics, is significantly jeopardised by Penman's translation as it stands. In order to show how the equilibrium among the extant translations can be toppled by Penman's text, I will first offer an examination of the three translations that engage in inter-dialogue. My subsequent examination of Penman's text is to be understood in contrastive terms.

#### **4.1 An Attempt at Continuity: The Translations of Margaret E.W. Jones, Susan E. Clark, and Barbara Ichiishi**

The noticeable degree of inter-relationship detectable in Tusquets's literary trajectory has provided a fertile ground for debate in the early stages of scholarly investigation on her work. Significant critical space has been assigned to deliberation as to whether her first three novels constituted a trilogy or not (only compounded by the publication of later works which moved along the same narrative and fictional parameters). Here

and there, critics apprehended her opus as a more or less versatile and, in a sense, accumulative thematic block which displayed a marked unity of forms and narrative strategies (Lecumberri 1988). Almost unanimously, an interpretation of her first three novels as a trilogy was constructed, to which the author, in what could be dubbed an instance of *a posteriori* accommodation of the author to critical parlance, responded positively (Dolgin 1988; Nichols 1989). Paul Julian Smith, for instance, talks of the trilogy as an interweaving of the three main forces that, he sees, sustain Tusquets's literary production, namely: "the highly self-conscious form of these novels, their minute attention to psychological nuance, and their acute social satire" (Smith 1992: 92). Mazquiarán de Rodríguez goes a step further in her account of Tusquets's propensity for continuity in her works when she incorporates a series of gender-related aspects that arguably chain her novels together, namely "the reiteration of the themes of love and female eroticism (both homosexual and heterosexual), the middle-aged female protagonist confronting marital problems, and the constant of Clara's presence" (Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 1991b: 126). Ichiishi gives precedence to the trope of women's inter-relational, inextricably dependent, psychological configuration and propounds an interpretation of Tusquets's novels as progressive reworkings of the theme of a specifically female progression towards mental and emotional autonomy, each of them incorporating the distinctive hallmarks of the different stages (viz. ages) in this evolution. The common denominator is, in her own words, "the same basic emotional situation: a middle-aged woman, wife and mother, undergoes an emotional crisis that shakes her world to its foundations, a crisis involving the failure of love" (Ichiishi 1999: 175).

Many critics have taken this unifying thrust further by talking of Tusquets's trilogy and of her ensuing works as a tetralogy or even a pentalogy. Barbara F. Ichiishi includes the novel *Para no volver* (1985) as a fourth revisitation of the same themes and forms already present in the trilogy (Ichiishi 1994: 23; 1999: 173), whilst Sanz Villanueva goes as far as to include *Siete miradas en un mismo paisaje* (1981), thus running counter to the widespread interpretation of this collection of short stories as a distinct element in Tusquets's opus. What all these varying interpretations ultimately suggest is that, regardless of the contrasting views as to how her individual works



should be bracketed, they all constitute a coherent and reiterative assemblage of the same themes and forms, a characteristic which, as we saw in the previous chapter, has begun to unsettle certain critics. The author herself talks about the creative process of the first three novels as informed by a strong sense of continuity that compelled her to keep on writing until the three novels could function as a thematic whole:

Yo no tenía ningún plan previo. Simplemente me puse a escribir una novela [*El mismo mar...*]. La escribí con mucho esfuerzo porque tenía que encontrar un tono narrativo, aunque las otras novelas no me costaron nada porque el tono fue el mismo. [...] Cuando estaba terminando *El amor...*, como me pareció muy duro, más cínico, más desagradable, creí que no acababa de dar mi imagen al mundo y que requeriría una tercera novela. Y supuse que ahí iba a terminar. (Tusquets in Dolgin 1988: 399)

Style, as the author indicates above, is one of the pillars supporting this unity. Even though there has been a manifest movement towards formal simplicity in her more recent publications, a tendency acknowledged by Ichiishi in her afterword to *Never to Return* (Ichiishi 1999: 183), the fact is that Tusquetsian textuality arises as an easily distinguishable conclave of recurrent narrative strategies and figures. To put it in Sanz Villanueva's words:

La voz personal de Esther Tusquets, lo mismo en su primera novela que en los relatos sucesivos, no radica tanto en los temas y problemas que explora como en la configuración de un discurso literario de rasgos pronunciados que van desde la permanente sustitución del mundo por una continuada mitificación hasta el gusto por unos llamativos recursos estilísticos. (Sanz Villanueva 1997: 28)

Consequently, and beyond our analysis of style as an essential, functional component in each of Tusquets's novels individually, style is in itself an essential unit which fuses all of Tusquets's novels into one articulate and consistent writing project. It is therefore of paramount importance that all the extant translations of Tusquets's works into English similarly coalesce into a formally coherent body of work. In the present section, I intend to examine the ways in which Tusquetsian textuality has been accurately observed in the English translations *The Same Sea as Every Summer* (1990), *Stranded* (1991), and *Never to Return* (1999).

As has been previously stated, the translations of Margaret E. W. Jones, Susan E. Clark, and Barbara F. Ichiishi can be said to constitute a cohesive continuum. They are the result of the translators' patent commitment towards Tusquets's writing

project, an involvement which manifests itself not only in their conscientious rendering of Tusquetsian textuality, but in the form of afterwords and accompanying glossaries which explicate the source text's concerns and affiliations (Jones 1990; Clark 1991; Ichiishi 1999). These translations, thus, reflect the translators' engagement with all three vertices of the literary work: writer, text, and reader. First, they compactly extricate Tusquets's own positioning in acknowledging her texts as the product of a number of biographical and generational interconnections which pre-configured the Catalan writer's own personality and literary agenda. To this effect, the work of Esther Tusquets is placed in line not only with the Spanish New Novel and its distinguished championing of a problematised style over content, but also in synchronisation with continental anxieties and emerging creative paths, probably best exemplified by the French *Nouvelle Roman*. As Jones explained:

The complexity of the text –its experimental form, fragmentary presentation, intertextuality, recondite style, allusive content, ambiguity, ironic and pessimistic overlay– reflects both the personal concerns of the writer and the generational concerns of contemporary European intellectuals. (Jones 1990: 187-188)

Esther Tusquets's relationship with the trends coming from France in the second half of the 20th Century remains, nevertheless, an ambivalent one, fluctuating between an almost reverential recognition of its leverage and a distrust of its assigned authoritativeness. She has claimed in interviews not to read theory at all (Tusquets in Nichols 1989: 73), an affirmation which, given France's pre-eminent rôle as an exporter of theoretical produce, could insinuate an implied distance from its influence. Similarly, she has averted a profound distaste for French cinema, which on a highly paradoxical note, she describes as "muy literario, muy pedante; [...] artificioso, [...] grandilocuente" (Tusquets in Nichols 1989: 75). However, apart from her avowal of Proust's momentous impingement on her own creative formation (Tusquets in Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 1991a: 181), there are in her fictional works numerous references to an early irresistible drive towards France as a source of creative inspiration and knowledge, at a time when Spain's intellectual drought was at its most severe. Those fictional accounts of constant trips to Perpignan about

which her female narrators frequently reminisce (present in practically all her novels), have, moreover, a biographical origin.<sup>13</sup>

The author's ambiguous positioning notwithstanding, critics' explicitation of a continental frame to Tusquets's novelistic production places her on a par with the increasingly self-conscious writing developing in Europe at the time, and warrants the inclusion of her work in the collection *European Women Writers Series*, where both *The Same Sea as Every Summer* and *Never to Return* appear. As a result, her work will be transmitted through a medium perceived in principle not only as supportive of, but thoroughly conversant with the tennets upheld by women-centred narratives in Europe. It is impossible to overemphasise, moreover, that the inclusion of Esther Tusquets in this collection (and for that matter, of Rosa Montero) can be read as a prestigious entry visa into the English-reading collective.<sup>14</sup>

The meaningful singularity of the textual format Tusquets assigns to her novels has visibly been given precedence in the translations. The source texts' own forces and recurrent traits, their 'problematical', sophisticated layout of tortuously long sentences and delayed semantic completion are felicitously conveyed in the target language, thus assigning a preponderant role to style in Tusquetsian novel production. A preliminary glance at all three translations shows that there has been an unequivocal observance of the original's textuality. The translations by Margaret E. W. Jones, Susan E. Clark, and Barbara F. Ichiishi do not resist the source texts' convoluted syntax and ornate lexicality, but offer careful renderings of the originals' idiosyncratic features. In this sense, their proposed translations observe style's own status as a semantically-loaded entity in Tusquets's fiction and make no bones about transcending the limits of linguistic (mainly syntactic) propriety in order to carry over the literary works' latent message; their translations are, in this light, veritable vehicles for difference.

In what follows, I will be quoting three pairs of examples out of a multitude, gleaned from the three originals and their respective English translations. These

---

<sup>13</sup> For a reading of intertextuality in *Para no voler* as redolent of a certain escapism from autochthonous, as in Catalan, forms of culture see Melgar-Foraster 2001-2002.

<sup>14</sup> For the original coinage and application of the entry-visa metaphor in translation and reception studies see Susam-Sarajeva (2002, 2003).

extracts are intended to show that the English-speaking readership is indeed presented with a markedly elaborate text; there is a patent sense of language being stretched, played with, distended, as further semantic nuances are continuously added to the initial utterance, which oftentimes functions as a mere starting point. The distinct appositional make-up of the original is delivered by a target text that unravels similarly through syntactic accretion. Let us propose, for instance, the following pair, extracted from *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* and Margaret E. W. Jones's *The Same Sea as Every Summer*:

EXAMPLE 1:

Hace mucho tiempo –porque el tiempo ha empezado a transcurrir con un ritmo distinto, y cuatro o cinco o seis días son ahora una enormidad de tiempo dentro de nuestra historia, la historia de Clara y la mía, que tal vez no sean tan siquiera una misma historia, sino dos historias absurdas y paralelas que no habrán de encontrarse en ninguna parte, porque quién cree todavía en el infinito, o mejor, antes que una historia, un mero pretexto mío para contar y revivir viejas historias–, hace mucho tiempo pues –exactamente cinco días–, desde la mañana en que la introduje por vez primera en el hondo verdor de mi pozo encantado, entre el rumor constante y apagado de las olas y los cañaverales, y, a intervalos, el pitido y el traqueteo de los trenes antes de adentrarse en el túnel, desde el día en que buscamos a la Bestia entre las hortensias y cayeron las bungavillas maduras sobre el regazo inerme de mi muñeca azul, desde entonces, proyectamos esta salida al mar en primavera, un mar limpio y sin gente, todavía virgen, o nuevamente virgen después del invierno. (EMM: 104-105)

A long time ago –because time has begun to flow with a different rhythm and four or five or six days are now an enormity of time within our story –my story and Clara's– which perhaps may not even be the same story, but two absurd, parallel stories never destined to meet –because who still believes in infinity?– or, rather than a story, a mere pretext for me to tell and relive old stories– a long time ago, then –exactly five days since the morning I brought her for the first time into the deep green of my enchanted well, to the constant, muffled noise of the waves, the canebrakes, and the intermittent whistle and clacking of the trains before they entered the tunnel, since the day when we looked for the Beast in the hydrangeas and the ripe bougainvilleas fell into my defenceless blue doll's lap, since that time, we planned this outing on the springtime sea, a clean sea without people, a sea still virgin, or newly virgin after the winter. (TSS: 82)

The extent to which the translated text strives to simulate the syntactically accumulative façade of the original is fully discernible. With the exception of a number of alterations in the punctuation, which nevertheless almost invariably observe the same breaks as in the source text, the translation offers a textual configuration that is purposefully demanding of the readers' notice and

concentration. This procedure has also informed the subsequent translations, as the following selection of passages taken from *Varada tras el último naufragio* and Susan E. Clark's *Stranded* are intended to show:

EXAMPLE 2:

Pablo se yergue unos instantes en la popa de la barca, y se precipita limpiamente de cabeza en el agua, se sumerge sólo uno o dos segundos y aflora ya a la superficie con las largas brazadas, el duro chapoteo de un estilo perfecto, espectacular, de competición, una silueta brillante y morena que se aleja veloz –sin volver ni una sola vez la cabeza hacia atrás para mirarlas o hacerles un amistoso gesto de saludo– y deja tras de sí un reguero de espuma, también él –piensa Eva y busca en los ojos de Elia un guiño cómplice, pero Elia no la mira, absorta hoy en sus musarañas particulares– sabiéndose observado, seguro de que las dos mujeres seguirán atentas o distraídas su chapoteo hasta que se convierta en un puntito lejano. (VUN: 17-18)

Pablo straightens up a few moments in the stern of the boat, and hurls himself cleanly into the water, headfirst, stays underwater only one or two seconds and surfaces with long strokes, the hard splash of a perfect style, spectacular, as if in competition, a shining brown silhouette moving swiftly and agilely away –without once turning his head to look at them or wave– leaving a trail of foam behind him, him too –thinks Eva and she searches Elia's eyes for the wink of an accomplice, but Elia doesn't look at her, absorbed today in her own vacant staring– knowing he's being observed, sure that the two women will be attentive to or amused by his splashing until he becomes a tiny point far off [...] (S: 16)

The stylistic fabric of the translation is visibly on a par with the original's degree of convolution. In its own autonomy, the English text unfolds according to the flexible parameters of syntactic distension and concentric subordination, whereby consecutive clauses are concatenated around a kind of epicentral main clause, usually the one with a referential semantic load. This is largely the constructional façade of the translated text, where the functionality of a tangibly self-conscious style has been adequately relayed.

Susan E. Clark's translation observes Tusquets's penchant for long-winded syntactical structures, but for one equally important textual element: the title. Without aiming to suggest that the translator alone is to be held responsible for all the choices implicit in the production of a translation, I would like to dwell on the implications of this decision, first, by hypothesising about its underlying motivations. Title alteration in translation has been described by David Homel, who proposed the coinage "tin-fluting", as "the practice whereby a translator makes a drastic change to

the title of the original because of its uncomfortable nature” (Homel 1995: 47). Issues touching on the cultural embeddedness of certain titles usually underlie this often imponderable “uncomfortable nature”. In this respect, for instance, the English translations of Mercè Rodoreda’s *La plaça del Diamant* offer a telling case in point, as both English titles (*The Pigeon Girl* and *The Time of the Doves*) seem an attempt to circumvent the translation of a highly localised cultural item with which the prospective addressee is (pre-)judged unfamiliar. Andreu-Besó examines this issue at some length in his article, and assigns significant space to another culture-bound point of controversy: the choice of the words ‘pigeon’ or ‘doves’ in the extant titles (Andreu-Besó 1999: 151).

The motivations for the English translation of the title *Varada tras el último naufragio* as *Stranded* evidently lie elsewhere. Itself a clipped citation from the textual material, the original title constitutes a typical sample of Tusquets’s characteristically long syntactical structures.<sup>15</sup> The title *Stranded* seems to result from a conviction that a literal reproduction of the original would read stodgy to excess. Thus the recapitulatory term *stranded* was chosen, which does in fact capture the marked sense of insulation the female protagonist cannot help but feel and effect around her throughout the summer vacation. Formally, however, the chosen title truncates the stylistic interlink ostensibly held by the original titles of the trilogy, and which can be interpreted as a further element of attachment schemed by the author. In an interview with Mercedes Mazquiarán de Rodríguez, Tusquets clarifies in this regard that:

I very much like games and reiteration. The three novels all have a hendecasyllable, a long title, very accented and poetic, lyrical; it’s something of a game. (Tusquets in Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 1991a: 177)

A similar technique can be identified in one of Tusquets’s contemporaries, Carme Riera, who for her first collections of short narratives chose two hendecasyllabic titles: *Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora* (1974) and *Jo pos per testimoni les*

---

<sup>15</sup> The passage in the novel where the ‘shipwreck’ image is first introduced reads as follows: “porque no se trata de que hayan peleado, ni de que existan otras mujeres en la vida de Jorge, que quizás sí existen, sino de algo mucho más terrible, infinitamente más irreparable, algo que la ha abocado a ella a ese quedar varada en la orillas, entre los restos del naufragio, excluida del

*gavines* (1977). Analogously, the works of another more recent Catalan writer, Imma Monsó, can be said to interlink through the distinctively concise and idiomatic style of their titles: *No se sap mai* (1996), *Com unes vacances* (1998), and *Tot un caràcter* (2001), a tendency recently pointed out by critic Fina Llorca Antolín (2003). Thus apprehended, the significantly reduced English version cancels out a potentially tuneful perception on the part of the English-reading audience of Tusquets's penchant for noticeably literary and stylistically flamboyant structures.

Likewise, the English translation of *Para no volver* by Barbara F. Ichiishi is a textually deferential rendering of an original that integrates, beyond Tusquets's accustomed narrative techniques of protracted syntactic juxtaposition and lyrical nuance, a distinct twist in the way of ironic exposition and acerbity. As a narrative that aims primarily at the subversion of the long engrained commonplaces of psychoanalytic discourse and practice, through the prism of a woman who has reluctantly, though expectantly, just started her own psychoanalytic treatment, the text is replete with seemingly off-the-cuff, facetious remarks that spring from the female narrator's distrust of psychoanalysis's tenets. The constant manipulation and de-contextualisation of psychoanalysis's most recognisable platitudes, an exercise of textual 'mangling' which aims at the dismantling of its widely known technicalities and secularised jargon, is effectively articulated through colloquial registers that call upon humour and sarcasm as the most serviceable tools for subversion. Tusquets herself has spoken of *Para no volver* as the novel that best integrates this gradually acquired sarcastic tone in her style, when she stated in an interview that: "There are fewer things that are dramatic, truly dramatic. That's why many of the things I do in my novels, in *Never to Return*, are no longer dramatic, they are comic dramatic" (Tusquets in Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 1991a: 188).

In this sense, Elena, the female narrator, engages in an uninterrupted peroration that springs from her pungent, laywoman's critique of one of patriarchy's most effective discourses of dominance. The conversational, even chatty tags and turns of phrase that pepper the text throughout add a further nuance to the multilayered whole that is Tusquetsian textuality, a property which critics have occasionally interpreted in the

---

fluir del tiempo, algo que la reduce a un anhelo obstinado por devenir piedra o lagarto [...]"

light of Kristeva's articulation of Menippean discourse and the carnivalesque (Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 1991b: 128). The following example illustrates how Elena's meditations on the validity of the eroticism/pornography dichotomy, articulated in conjunction with her underlying critique of psychoanalysis, are textually constructed by means of a discourse that is both syntactically intricate and conversational in tone; ultimately, one could say, a prolonged, probing dialogue with herself. It should not go unnoticed either that Elena is here but a convenient medium for the author's own convictions or views on the matter. This is as yet a virtually unexplored aspect of Tusquets work, which has been elsewhere referred to as the 'propagandistic' slant in many feminist fictions, including Rosa Montero's early narrative:

### EXAMPLE 3:

marxismo y erotismo, *Ruedo Ibérico* y *Playboy*, tan estrechamente hermanados en la represión franquista, que se le hizo luego a Elena difícil –y la dificultad persiste en cierto modo hasta hoy– establecer distinguos entre erotismo y pornografía y coincidir con las feministas en su rechazo radical de esta última. (El feminismo, igual que la psiquiatría o la religión, logra infaliblemente que arrugue el Mago el entrecejo, ¿temerá ilícitas competencias que vengan a disputarle el alma **a sus pacientes hembras?**, ¿o se deberá todo a oscuras e intrincadas motivaciones personales, **hincadas tal vez en el inconsciente?** **Porque, veamos**, ¿con qué asocia el Mago la pornografía y a las feministas? Y el Mago le recuerda, por centésima vez, que no es él sino ella la que se está psicoanalizando.) **Porque** sí le parece a Elena que tienen razón las feministas, cuando afirman que, si bien un erotismo lo más liberado posible, jalonado por múltiples perversiones –¿qué sería del erotismo sin la perversión?– y enriquecido por catervas de fantasmas –¿qué sería sin ellos la sexualidad?–, puede actuar como fuerza revulsiva y por lo tanto creadora, la pornografía, por el contrario, lejos de liberar, lo que pretende es encorsetar la sexualidad dentro de un orden, y es ya realmente **el colmo** que creen para nosotros un esquema universal de sexualidad y nos impongan a presión unas torpes y burdas perversiones y unos desvaídos y desangelados prototipos de fantasmas. (PNV: 54)

Marxism and eroticism, *Ruedo Ibérico* and *Playboy*, so closely allied in Franco's repressive regime that it later became very hard for Elena –and in a sense the difficulty persists to this day– to distinguish between eroticism and pornography and to go along with the feminists' radical rejection of the latter (feminism, like psychiatry and religion, invariably makes the Wizard frown, does he fear illicit competition for the souls of **his female patients?** Or is it all due to obscure and complex personal motives, **sunk deep in the unconscious?** **because let's see**, what does the Wizard associate pornography and feminism with? And the Wizard reminds her for the hundredth time that it's not he but she who is being psychoanalyzed), **because it does**

---

(Tusquets 1980: 34-35).



**indeed** seem to Elena that the feminists are right when they affirm that, while the most liberated eroticism, enhanced by multiple perversions –what would eroticism be without perversion?– and enriched with throngs of ghosts –what would sexuality be without them?– can provide a salutary shock and thus be creative, in contrast pornography, far from liberating sexuality, seeks to harness it within an order, and **it's really the limit** for them to create for us a universal scheme of sexuality and pressure us into accepting some crude, obscene perversions and dull, lifeless prototypical phantoms. (NTR: 40)

Ichiiishi's text heedfully considers and relays the original's ceaseless concatenation of the narrator's impressions and suspicions, even if the rootedly sardonic tone of some of her remarks is somewhat attenuated. Her rendering attempts to keep pace with the source text's eye-catching use of subordination and appositional syntax, an endeavour made manifest in her similarly intricate use of punctuation. The colloquial overtones highlighted in the original have also been observed. Overall, Ichiiishi's text is the result of the translator's acumen and thorough acquaintance with Tusquets's literary trajectory in general (as her comprehensive monograph *The Apple of Earthly Love* shows) and with the idiosyncrasies and specific traits of her 1985 novel. Her translation comes to solidify the English readership's perception of Tusquets's work as the persistent exercise of constant resumption of the same tropes and forms that critics have perceived it to be.

In the previous chapter I posited an approach to Ichiiishi's scholarly work on Tusquets as flawed by the anticipatory assumption that her literary project is fully in agreement with the tenets of French feminist parlance of the 60s and 70s. Although her well-articulated attempt to trace a connection between a woman's physicality and gender-specific psychological make-up, on the one hand, and Tusquets's distinctively multilayered textuality as cathartic, on the other, needed to be lauded (as opposed to, I contended, the widespread critical tendency to promote this correlation as a given or as one that can be plausibly substantiated through thematic analysis), I proposed a contrasting reading of Tusquets's style, not as liberational, but as the embodiment of precisely those mechanisms of literary entrapment that invariably thwart her characters' lives. Despite her, I believe, misjudged appraisal of Tusquets's distinctive style as an instrument of self-palliation, and as an echoic mimeograph of the female body, Ichiiishi's translation is the result of an accomplished reading of Tusquets's style as a crucial component in Tusquets's work. I would like to examine this

problem at some length here, for it points to one of the most challenging issues I have confronted when studying her translation.

Barbara Ichiishi ascribes a given interpretative value to Tusquets's writing mode, both as a critic and as a specialist on her work. Her project springs (like my own) from the primary conviction that an informed and compromising analysis of style in the Catalan author's opus holds the key to an improved understanding of her literary programme, and ultimately, a means to assuage the recent critical unease about Tusquets's veritable feminist intentions. This overriding thrust in her scholarly work makes her a more than suitable translator of Tusquets's novels, and a most opportune one indeed: an English translation that foregrounds and insists on the significance of form is a welcome one, if only to enable and to keep debate over Esther Tusquets's literary agenda alive on a transatlantic scale. It is in this sense that the translations of Tusquets into English, understood as the critics' furtherance of their project on the author, have gained from scholarly interpretations in a way that criticism itself has not. In other words, while critics's insistence that Tusquets's literary agenda is attuned to theoretical notions of feminine writing has ended up generating a sense of wasted effort, in the translational scene, such connection has yielded texts that are felicitously attentive to stylistic detail and, thus, apposite renditions of the original works as I have analysed them. Such a paradox testifies to the at times contradictory logic and complexities of cultural transposition, where critical work and translations function as two interconnected, yet also independent pathways.

We can take a moment now to conjecture about the consequences that stylistically aware translations such as those by Ichiishi or Jones may have on the receiving audience, from the point of view of the mutual dialogue thus established between the text and the prospective reader. By producing a target text that emulates the original's cascade of both central and peripheral detail, and deliberately complex style, the translator establishes a further bond that stretches on to the reader. In other words, the translator does not take it upon herself to estimate in advance her readers' knowledge or ability to engage with an overtly challenging text. On the contrary, she presupposes a genuine disposition on the part of the reader to be presented with a demanding textual grid, and thus, she does not posit a constraining translational

practice whereby her readers will be spared disturbing stylistic complexities and obscure culture-specific allusions in the benefit, supposedly, of facile communication. A more profound inter-dialogue of communion is effected, due to its increased complexity, between a textual recreation suffused with convolutions and difficulty and its receiving community, a specific property of Tusquets's work which Nina Molinaro has exalted as "the double challenge of reading Tusquets's fiction" (Molinaro 1991: 17):

One arrives at the double challenge of reading Tusquets's fiction. Not only do her characters pursue the process of distinguishing and finding a point of coexistence for art and life, but her readers embark on a similar search to accommodate the "story told" and the "story telling." The protagonists wander among the conflicting realms of imagination and reality, sometimes confusing them, sometimes immersing one in the other. They nonetheless remain ever conscious of the mutual dependence and organic quality of the two. In much the same way, the text wanders from referentiality to self-conscious immersion, writing its object from within and without and decentering authority. Language itself disrupts the transmission of meaning by rendering interpretation problematic. All of these components make Tusquets's work a unique test for contemporary theory. (Molinaro 1991: 17-18).

By granting special emphasis to the ways the English translations of Tusquets's novels handle three of the integrating elements of the creative axis (author, text and reader), I have tried to demonstrate that the texts *The Same Sea as Every Summer*, *Stranded*, and *Never to Return* function as real "channel(s) for the new" (Boase-Beier and Holman 1999: 11). With their translational practices, they have contributed to truncating the widespread tendency to even out difference and to preserve the status quo of stylistic and thematic acceptability, a trend that seems to be the underlying thrust of Penman's translation, as we are about to find out.

## **4.2 Elements of Disruption: Style and Sexuality in Bruce Penman's Translation**

In this section, I will try to show that Bruce Penman's *Love is a Solitary Game* is significantly at variance with the attentive textual observance displayed in the other three existing translations of Tusquets's novels to date, thus deforming the prevalent view of her opus as a coherent system of themes and forms. The omissions and significant structural changes effected in his text are also troublesome insofar as they

can give rise to a considerable amount of confusion about the elsewhere avowed singularity of Tusquetsian style and its manifest engagement with feminine thematic thrust and imagery, a characteristic of her literary work which has been the pivotal focus of most academic research on the author. The gulf unfurled by his translation between the literary works and the critical material available to the receiving audience can be tentatively explained by the fact that Penman's translation itself was not initiated within an academic milieu, a determining factor in the editorial process, it can be surmised, that brings it into contrast with *The Same Sea as Every Summer* and *Never to Return*, both published by The University of Nebraska Press (*Stranded* was published by The Dalkey Archive Press). Although the publishing houses were unwilling to provide any information regarding the publication of Tusquets's novels when contacted, a series of conjectures can be nevertheless advanced on this matter. In the first instance, when produced under one and the same institutional environment, translations and academic work on one author arguably operate in a sort of interpretative unison, often culminating in those cases when academic and translator are in fact the same person. The figures of Margaret E. W. Jones and Barbara F. Ichiishi perfectly exemplify this working context, although some of the most prominent names in this regard are Carol Maier, an eminent scholar in the field of Translation Studies and Hispanism as well as the translator of Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle* (*Memoirs of Leticia Valle*, 1994) and María Zambrano's *Delirio y destino* (*Delirium and Destiny: A Spaniard in her Twenties*, 1999), and Kathleen March (critic and translator of the Galician author Rosalía de Castro). A favourable corollary of these working and publishing conditions is the symbiotic association thus established between the critical and the translational activity. In other words, not only the scholarly work a researcher may produce prior to the translation will have a propitious effect on the latter but also, by way of reciprocal inter-projection, further, and possibly more compound critical ramifications will emerge on a given author after the translations of his/her work have been made available. This inter-connection is particularly germane to gender-oriented criticism and translation practice. As more women authors are being rescued from critical oblivion and approached for their long neglected feminist value, translations

accommodating of this renewed view are also demanded and produced. The case of Rosalía de Castro's work being recovered for its subtle, and yet unmistakeable feminist significance, and the revised English translations published thereon, is highly pertinent in this respect. In this light, the role of translation not only as an activity complementary to or resultant from literary criticism but as, indeed, a different manifestation of literary criticism itself cannot be overemphasised.

Penman's *Love is a Solitary Game* was published in 1985, at a time when scholarly work on Tusquets, or, for that matter, gender-oriented criticism on Hispanic women authors, was only just beginning to emerge. Equally important for an understanding of its dislocated nature appears to be its publication by The John Calder/Riverrun Press, a house extraneous to academic promotion. To the best of my knowledge, the translator himself is not (could not easily have been, due to the incipient stages of the discipline), a mediator conversant with gender-oriented trends in Hispanic letters, a fact which puts him in stark contrast (in fact, in disadvantage) with Margaret E. W. Jones or Barbara F. Ichiishi. What I am trying to point out by means of these preliminary remarks is that, if a critique of Penman's translation is to be articulated which presents it as an element of incongruity in the organic process of Tusquets's acculturation into English, this critique needs to start with an acknowledgement of the scholarly demarcation of the time (logically, at an earlier state of sophistication, resilience and tolerance). Penman's translation, even if it is liable to various modes of censure from the present gender-conscious critical standpoint (a critique that is the core of the following section), deserves to be approached as the invaluable work of dissemination that it represents.

The analysis I will now turn to justify is supported, first, by a series of style-centred interrogations touching on syntactic configuration and poetic register. Later on, I will look at the issue of female sexuality in his text. What I will ultimately try to show is that Penman's translation falls into noticeable inadequacy when placed side by side with the three other existing translations, and, more generally, with the compelling gender-centred theoretical apparatus that has been applied to Tusquets's work consistently.

#### **4.2.1 Syntax and Punctuation in *Love is a Solitary Game*: Strategies for the Organisation of Information**

Formally, the novels of Esther Tusquets seem to evoke the idea of a ball of wool unravelling endlessly. Her stories unfold in the form of prolonged stretches of language, structured solely by various signs of punctuation, purposefully interspersed, and a recurrent use of discursive connectives and conjunctions which allow the text to flow virtually unfragmented (full stops and paragraph breaks make a scant presence in Tusquets's novels). The reader is presented with a text whose layout strikes him/her from the very outset as an array of lengthy blocks of text several pages long.

But Tusquets's novels do submit to a sense of plot delineation. The argument flows, sluggishly but firmly, towards the final reunion and elucidation of the story line, and this is achieved by a characteristic method for the dosage of information, whereby the chain of events is continuously interrupted by the insertion of lengthy digressions springing from the narrator's psyche. This reproduces, on the one hand, the muddled subjectivity of most of Tusquets's female narrators and, on the other, creates a sense of structural suspense whereby main sentences are interrupted by intervening deviations from the plot, which are in turn disrupted by further parenthetical insertions. More importantly, this narrative format relies solidly on the author's sophisticated use of punctuation and syntactical arrangement. Her recurrent use of commas, hyphens, parentheses (all of which serve to accommodate the ceaseless concatenation of further insights on the original reflection or event) mimic a vortex of mental ruminations that originate in the narrator's problematised psyche.

It is in this sense that punctuation in the novels of Esther Tusquets can be analysed as yet another textual sign which functionally marks discourse and serves to integrate the all-relevant inner world of the narrator. The worlds of memory, fantasy, and conscience formally coalesce with the unfolding story in the shape of protracted parenthetical incursions and digressions between hyphens. If "to mark the text is also to make it" (Bray, Handley, and Henry 2000a: xvii), Tusquetsian distinctive textuality is strongly indebted to the feature of punctuation and her unconventional stretching of the text's space and form.

Any foray in Tusquets's texts for the purposes of comparison is in itself problematic, as most of the passages are not of a 'quotable' dimension. Sentences are interrupted and associatively recapitulated after lengthy digressions, in such a way that even a reduced reproduction of the text could be implausible. For this reason I have selected one protracted excerpt and its translation, which I include in the form of appendices. My comparison of these extracts is intended to highlight the real sites of textual tension between original and translation, where the distinctiveness and, more importantly, the functionality of Tusquets's style are jeopardised (see Appendices 3 and 4).

What strikes the reader in the first instance is the original's total absence of full stops. The passage streams ahead in a series of concatenated utterances separated by commas, mainly when the central story line is being developed, or discontinued by hyphens encircling informative passages about the narrator's thoughts, which are all indirectly cited. A lengthy digression occurs in the extract, which begins with "una Elia que sabe no pueden conmoverla el dinero..." and finishes after two pages with "el ritmo de la vida o el veraneo de los niños". It causes a major disruption in the reading process and requires a recapitulatory repetition of the textual referent that had been temporarily abandoned. In this textual interval, attention is shifted towards the character's identity and questions about the nature of her life, past, and overall persona are mentioned. It is in the course of this type of intermissions that significant light is shed on the representation and characterisation of Elia in depth, as they include references to her truncated artistic aspirations ("que ha dejado tras de sí un oscuro reguero de tareas emprendidas y nunca terminadas"), to her low self-esteem and her dim maternal role ("y sabes sobre todo que la vida es de ellos para ellos, y no para que se la apropie en sus inicios esa hembra melancólica e insatisfecha, caprichosa e inútil que malcumple quizá sus funciones de madre") and the irreversible drive towards sheer inanition in her life ("ella que ni capaz es ya de alterar el orden absurdo de la casa, el ritmo de su vida o el verano de los niños"). These passages are impregnated with subjectivity and are generally marked in the text by means of hyphens. Punctuation is therefore relevant, as it contributes to the text's meaning, and should be granted similar prominence in its translation.

Contrariwise, punctuation is used in Penman's translation to neutralise the text's cadence. An exploration of Penman's extract reveals what develops as a constant in his translation: an utter re-interpretation of the original's use of punctuation, which responds to a larger pattern of structural and informal re-ordering that affects the text as a whole. Full stops are dutifully inserted whenever there is a minor advance in the argumental thread, thus turning the original's spiral rhythm into a text that reads as a disciplined, conventionally organised stretch of language. Sentences are concomitantly shortened and word order, or rather, sentence order, is constantly affected. In Tusquets's novel, topical elements are temporarily abandoned in order to accommodate further insights on the argument. Both structure and story line develop by means of the ceaseless accretion and concatenation of its elements. In Penman's translation this essential feature is overlooked and structural clarity is evidently privileged. Alongside the divergent use of punctuation, Penman's re-ordering of sentences into linearity necessitates the constant incursion of ungainly recapitulatory tags which serve a mere syntactical purpose (stylistically, they are in fact costly to the widespread interpretation of Tusquetsian textuality as discursive flow). Let us look at the following sentences, extracted from the appendix, where those 'syntactically necessary elements' have been highlighted (the original counterparts have not been reproduced here; the reader is asked to bear in mind that these tags are simply not present in the source text):

**She had done so partly in order** to still the last fears... (LSG: 58)

**The main object of the postponement, however,** was to enable her to savour... (58)

Bored, **that is to say**, with the few forms of power... (59)

**Another thing** she can't take seriously... (59)

Further, the translator frequently resorts to tags redolent of an academic style in order to resume the subject that was never abandoned in the original. In the passage chosen, the translator writes after a paragraph break which is not there in the source text:

Against this background, the intensity of her imagination and her senses **to which we have already referred**... (60)



Likewise, he reorganises the discourse further down into an orderly and well-reasoned exposition of Elia's ungovernable dependence on strong emotions in order to continue living. Let us reproduce that short passage here:

It is as if Elia's life **consisted of just two elements: on the one hand**, a series of brief attempts to give up or change the drug, which always come to grief because of her chronic inability to carry out her intentions, **on the other hand**, longer periods when she faces the impossibility of learning to live without the drug and devotes herself to the struggle to obtain further supplies, at any cost. (61)

Similar examples of this type intersperse the whole of Penman's translation. In the following extracts, for instance, he resorts to a similar recapitulatory tag in order to remind the reader of the overarching argument being developed, namely, Clara's musings over Elia as an idealised "Little Queen of the Cats":

#### EXAMPLE 4:

Puede aparecer aquí la Little Queen of the Cats, y verlos, y detener entre la manada de gatos salvajes su carruaje blanco —¿será por eso que no huyen de inmediato, cuando aparece un coche con los faros encendidos, en medio de la noche, será para cerciorarse antes de que no es el coche de la pequeña reina, y será por eso que su fuga final es siempre más airada, o más decepcionada?—, y abrir la portezuela- la mirada brillante, la boca risueña, sedosos los cabellos de oro entre las pieles blancas... (AJS: 81)

She will stop her snow-white coach in the middle of the horde of half-wild cats... perhaps, thinks Clara, that's why they don't run away at once when they see a car with its headlights on coming towards them in the middle of the night; perhaps they want to make sure that it isn't the Little Queen's coach; and perhaps it's disappointment that makes them so angry when they do finally run away. **Anyway, to continue with the legend of the cats**, the Queen will open the door of her coach, and appear to them in her white fur coat, with her golden hair, smiling mouth and shining eyes... (LSG: 76)

The incursion of these formulaic turns of phrase, visibly alien to the general tone and configuration of Tusquets's text derives from the translator's intention to divide her discourse into easily 'absorbable' stretches of language that the reader can assimilate unproblematically. This is, in various senses, an operation of processing Tusquets's characteristically opaque and stodgy language into an unobtrusive communication of its content. The strong correlation between style and content in Tusquets's novels is subsequently lost: *Love is a Solitary Game* reads primarily as a story, as a provoking plot which relegates style to an inconspicuous state.

This meaningful alteration can already be anticipated after a cursory glance at the synopses and blurb appearing on the back cover of the translation. The analysis of the binding material encircling translations has begun to attract careful consideration by certain scholars, who see these extra-textual constituents as “the obvious place to begin an analysis of the translation as interface in that they are, in a quite literal sense, the elements involved in the to-and-fro shuttle between the domestic reader’s perception and the foreign text’s otherness” (Harvey 2003: 43). An approximation to the blurb in Penman’s translation will in effect substantiate the view that:

Analysis of this material –which is the threshold between reader and text and between domestic and foreign values– is an ideal place to start to identify the processes of negotiation encoded in translations themselves and to capture essential aspects of the ideological trouble caused by them. (Harvey 2003: 68).

The clearly thematic focus of the promotional synopsis in the back cover to *Love is a Solitary Game* indicates that style as a powerful component of the original has not been prioritised in the translation. While in the original’s cover, there is a clear reference to Tusquets’s distinctive style as “una prosa lírica de gran calado” (Tusquets 1979, c1996: back cover), attention is manifestly shifted in the translation towards the work’s subversive plot in relation to its time of publication. The novel is erroneously launched as “The first sexually explicit novel from Spain, certainly the first with a feminist bias” (Tusquets 1985b: back cover), an entirely heteroclitie remark which can only be attributed to a will to sensationalise its entrance into the Anglo-American market. There are several cultural references which help the reader locate the action, both in time, through a contrastive, yet misleading reference to the domestic culture (the story, we read, occurs in “the post-Franco period, when democracy returned to Spain, [which] can in many ways be compared to post-Cromwellian Britain”) and space, with an explicit reference to “the background, climate and individuality of Catalan society [which made] this liberation very different from elsewhere in Europe” (Tusquets 1985b: back cover). There is no allusion whatever to Tusquets’s idiosyncratic style, which reinforces its significant effacing from the translated work. From the point of view of cultural misprision, the blurb represents an exemplary instance of a deliberate compliance with the values domestically ascribed to the source culture. As we read that Tusquets’s novel “has

delighted, titillated and shocked that most puritanical and male-dominated country” (Tusquets 1985b: back cover), an understated reinforcement of the old stereotype is passed on uninterrogated.

#### 4.2.2 Repetition

A further trait of Tusquets’s style, which the author herself has acknowledged as prominent (Tusquets in Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 1991a: 177), is its distinctive repetitive contour. Her writing unfolds in a spiral of recurrent images, symbols, and motifs which verbally simulate the narrator’s troubled psyche. In the case of Elia in *El mismo mar...*, stylistic repetition reproduces the narrator’s nearly obsessive regression to all those sites of experiential tension that marked her existence: a problematic relationship with her mother and her first love Jorge’s suicide. Similarly, textual repetition in *El amor...* could be also interpreted as an indicator of the protagonist’s condition of social and psychological entrapment. In this case, her virtually immovable state of emotional stagnation, and the very little room for real mobility or autonomous determination in her life are evoked by the repetitive, some have said “circular” (Ichiishi 1994: 20), patterns of her writing style. Thus, the numerous examples of textual repetition in the novel reflect the protagonist’s immobility and inability to identify and break free from the chains of societal conventions.

Penman’s translation has in various ways obliterated this interpretation of Tusquets’s repetitive style as laden with psychological values. For the sake of anticipated communication and narrative functionality, the translator frequently obviates purposeful repetitions. These obliterations are all the more significant, as we shall see, when they functioned as free indirect discourse markers in the original.

As has been previously noted, *El amor...* is not a first-person narrative. The story is voiced through an omniscient third-person narrator who at times is effaced in favour of the characters themselves. It is at these moments that the action is focalised by Elia, Clara, or Ricardo alternately, a narratorial alteration which provokes a necessary, though in the case of Tusquets, subtle change in style. Thus, free indirect discourse markers emerge, such as the insertion of interjections or exclamations, as well as discursive re-workings of the textual flow, which create a certain

conversational flavour and imitate the characters' dialogue with themselves. In the following excerpt, for instance, Ricardo's sudden and utterly destructive fit of rage before he finally sodomises Elia in front of a horrified Clara, is stylistically conveyed by the obsessive repetition of the same syntactical pattern, marked by the cramming of highly subjective adjectives springing from his sexist sense of superiority:

Y Ricardo siente mutiplicadas por mil, condensadas en este solo instante, la impotencia y la frustración y la rabia de siempre, centrada hoy la ira en estas dos mujeres **tan** estúpidas pero **tan** hermosas, y se pregunta por qué habrán de ser las mujeres **tan** torpes y **tan** bellas, **tan** absurdas e irracionales, **tan** incapaces de entender, **tan** inesperadas y arbitrarias, **tan** inferiores en todo o casi todo, **tan** poco sus iguales, y **tan** capaces no obstante **de arrastrarle, de absorberle** como absorben la materia y la vida los agujeros negros que taladran el cielo [...] (AJS: 138-139)

If we now turn to the English translation, we encounter an irregular rendering of this type of functional repetitive patterns. As arises from the following paired example, there is no traceable sense of subjective focalisation transferred in the translation, as the original repetitions (the compulsive repetition, for instance, of the adverb 'no' as a marker of the character's attempt to deny his imminent sexual desire) are left untranslated:

#### EXAMPLE 5:

No es deseo erótico, **no**, al menos en un primer momento no es precisamente esto.” (AJS: 40)

What he feels during these first few moments is not exactly sexual desire. (LSG: 37)

The translator opts for an explicit verbalisation of the focalising agent by introducing Ricardo's thoughts with the addition “what he feels”. This turn fully communicates the source of these reflections, that is, Ricardo, but neglects the above-mentioned appraisal of words and structures as stylistic indices of the character's psychology. Moreover, this strategy serves to translate *El amor...* as a narrative exercise constantly focalised by a third-person agent, thus lengthening the distance between narrator and action, which is, on the contrary, so characteristically narrow in Tusquets's work. The same obliteration of repetition, in this case functioning as a discursive re-working of Clara's own reflections as she simultaneously recalls those moments of happiness with Elia, occurs in the following example:

#### EXAMPLE 6:

Y podían entonces salir juntas **las dos, a veces, algunas maravillosas pocas veces, las dos solas**, a tomar en Sitges un aperitivo con almejas a orillas de la mar [...] (AJS: 54)

And sometimes –on one or two marvellous occasions– they had gone out together, just the two of them, to drink an appetitif and eat shellfish by the sea at Sitges. (LSG: 50)

The repetition of “veces” and “las dos” is obliterated in the translation through a re-working of the structure and the translator’s differing lexical choices (“sometimes-occasions”; “they-the two of them”).

On a larger scale, repetition plays a prominent role in the overall configuration of Tusquetsian textuality. Comparable in its function to her use of paratactical punctuation and of the same conjunction in sequence, the ceaseless reiteration of the same syntactical pattern or lexical item is of paramount importance for the text’s sense of fluidity and Tusquets’s distinctive overextension of prescribed grammatical premises. These stylistic tendencies in Tusquets’s opus have been ascribed, as we have previously noted, to the general thrust and forms of feminine literature. Barbara Ichiishi, for instance, established a direct link between repetition as a literary figure and those theories of female psychology as wanting in autonomous delineation and definite perception of the self:

Women’s literature and art is often spiral in form: the circularity and the repetitive elements which draw things together in the mind express the yearning for the human connection, for unity of their past and present selves, and as instinctive rejection of a linear, logocentric approach to life. (Ichiishi 1994: 11-12)

In the present analysis, I intend to approach the issue of textual repetition as a trait intrinsically linked to Tusquets’s style, not so much as a result of the author’s overt intention to partake in a typically feminine writing tradition, whose existence she has explicitly disputed in an interview (Tusquets in Nichols 1989: 72), but as yet another index of Tusquets’s writing style as eminently psychological, inherently linked to the content and profoundly redolent of the same constraints and misalliances that circumscribe their lives to following the prescriptive, literary script of patriarchy. The

author has in fact acknowledged the almost inevitable and somehow predetermined relation between form and content in her novels:

Con mi primera novela, no había un plan previo de estilo en que iba a escribir, más bien hay una historia que quiero contar, entonces empiezo a escribirla y me sorprende el estilo. Me sorprende que sea tan lleno de paréntesis, y de incisos y de guiones, unas frases que duran cuatro páginas. [...] Seguro que si me hubieran preguntado cómo quería escribir o lo que a mí me gusta, no hubiera dicho jamás esto. Entonces supongo que es que la historia que quiero contar requiere este tipo de estilo. (Tusquets in Nichols 1989: 73)

In view of this fundamental link between content and style, and for the purposes of the present comparison, between textual repetition and psychological characterisation, I would like to have a look at the ways this feature has been carried over in Penman's translation. Let us look for instance, at the following extract, where the repetition of the word "años" and the structural parallelism ensuing, effectively reflects the agitated state of mind of the implied narrator (Ricardo in this case) at Elia's movements, suggestive of imminent intimacy:

#### EXAMPLE 7:

Es como haber mirado durante años y años, años innumerables, los libros o los dulces o los trenes al otro lado del escaparate, más allá del cristal [...] (AJS: 40)

It is as if you had spent **innumerable years** staring through a shop window at the **books, sweets and trains on the other side of the glass** [...] (LSG: 37)

Noticeably, the translated passage reads as an abridged and simplified version of the original. The repetition of the word "años" and of the structures introduced by "o los" has been suppressed. Similarly, the virtually synonymous expressions "al otro lado del escaparate, más allá del cristal", which add to the overall rhetorical tone of the text, have merged into the abbreviated "on the other side of the glass". An analogous reduction has been implemented in the following example:

#### EXAMPLE 8:

curioso que en este balance gélido de sus posibilidades y en este simulacro de análisis salvaje, el chico no se haya decidido a decir lo evidente, **como si no existiera o como si él no lo supiera o como si fuera algo** carente en absoluto de importancia [...] (EJS: 29-30)

It is strange, amid all this cool drawing up of balance-sheets, this apparently brutal analysis, one thing remains unsaid, **as if it were unknown to the poet or of no importance.** (LSG: 27)

Again, the reasons for these obstructing translational options may lie in the translator's attempt to lighten the unquestionable stylistic weight of Tusquets's style. As a result of his suppression of fundamental traits such as repetition, both as a characterisation device and as an avowed characteristic of Tusquets's style, the translation reads as a neutral text where traces of a markedly subjective structuring and arrangement of its formal elements are only vaguely perceptible.

#### **4.2.3 Poetic Language and Rhetoric Style**

As was already pointed out, Tusquets's works exhibit a manifest orientation towards a powerfully lyrical view of life and love, this lyrical force functioning as both marker of formal affectation and as indicative of the female narrator's need for evasion and of their subsequent, exaggerated, often unrealistic perceptions. The lyrical tone of Tusquetsian textuality and all the elements which serve to its construction should not be rated as accessory textual paraphernalia, but as a trait of cardinal importance for our interpretation of Tusquets's women's voices as afflicted by an all-pervading need for evasion. In the present section, I intend to orient my analysis to discerning the ways in which this 'poeticity' has been re-created in the English translation.

So far, our study has focused on the syntactical façade of Tusquets's style: the issues of punctuation and structural repetition have been addressed as textual markers with a profound psychological value, which have been inadequately re-interpreted in the translation. Granted, punctuation and textual repetition play a significant role in the construction of poeticity in Tusquets's novels as well; they powerfully create a sense of rhythmic flow, characteristically redolent of the most mingled and obsessive ruminations. In combination, they allow the text to unravel in a particularly melodious cadence and emphatic mood,

Alongside the text's volubly fluent and repetitive tempo, poeticity in Tusquets's novels relies also on the author's lexical choices, viewed from both the semantic and the morphological angle. In short, it is a trend in her work that her choice of lexical

items is governed by, on the one hand, a taste for extreme specificity which may give rise to detailed depictions of a simple movement, a piece of clothing, or a smile. On the other hand, lexical items in Tusquets's style seem to cluster into groups of same-category words. They are usually three-element clusters, even though pairs of words belonging to the same grammatical category also abound. The use of epithets is therefore rife in Tusquetsian textuality, a trait that testifies to its marked rhetoricity and penchant for reiteration. Formally, they contribute to the concoction of the aforementioned emphatic rhythm. The following selection of examples is intended to highlight Penman's tendency to reduce rhetoricity in his translation and to simultaneously augment communicative transparency:

EXAMPLE 9:

Lo cierto es que Ricardo está **tan nervioso, tan asustado y tan anhelante** –las tres cosas a un tiempo y en su grado máximo– que no acierta, tras entrar a trompicones en el coche armándose un lío con la gabardina, a cerrar la portezuela [...] (EJS: 70-71)

Be that as it may, **he is certainly in a bad state of nerves**. Tormented by terror and desire simultaneously in the highest possible degree, he stumbled his way into the car, getting his raincoat caught as he did so, and couldn't manage to shut the door. (LSG: 66)

EXAMPLE 10:

y una curiosa **laxitud o languidez** que impone a los movimientos un ritmo insólito [...] (EJS: 7)

it causes a curious, slack lassitude, imposing a strange rhythm [...] (LSG: 5)

EXAMPLE 11:

y lo que **ha iniciado y prosigue y prolonga** sin fin, con un rigor, eso sí, y un orden implacables [...] (EJS: 24)

He went on and on unendingly, with impeccable rigour and perfect order [...] (LSG: 22)

Noticeably, the translator appears to extract and foreground the semantic load of the original structures as a consistent translational strategy, subsequently neglecting what has been described as a constant in the text: the characteristic clusters of same-



category words (a pattern which applies, as the examples above illustrate, to adjectives, nouns or verbs) are often dissolved into more or less arbitrary structures. Word categories are changed and the rhetoricity created by the accumulation of words which are both grammatically and semantically alike is suppressed. The lyrical tone is also occasionally neutralised, as some of the translator's grammatical choices pertain to a rather formal register, thus bringing about a slight change of key in the overall modulation of the text and reinforcing the misleading image of an aloof narrative agent. In the following example, for instance, the poetical tone created in the original mainly by word order and the unconventional use of the word "soles" in its plural form is dissipated in the translation by means of syntactical re-structuration and neutral lexical choices:

EXAMPLE 12:

y ve reflejados los dos cuerpos en el espejo, muy blanca la carne del muchacho sobre la suya propia, ya bronceada por los soles de primavera [...] (EJS: 76)

and sees their two bodies reflected in the mirror. The boy's body looks very white against hers, which is bronzed by exposure to spring sunshine [...] (LSG: 71)

An analogous shift occurs in the following example:

EXAMPLE 13:

pero piensa también que existe cierta curiosa semejanza entre todo aquello y esta primavera de ahora [...] (EJS: 12)

It also crosses her mind that **there is a remarkable amount of common ground** between that far-off scene and the springtime which now surrounds her [...] (LSG: 9)

The translator inserts the expression highlighted above in an unnecessary movement towards a formal, almost technical register. Once more, we can only conjecture about the motivations for this decision, which could be located within the wider aim to reproduce Tusquetsian characteristic literariness in its own way. The translator may have perceived the original style as, indeed, remarkably lofty and erudite, (Tusquets's majestic use of the Spanish lexicon and syntax in order to engender her particular style is liable to have this effect), and thus opted for the re-creation of a formally elevated target text which, in view of the examples above, mismatches the original's

tonal quality to a noticeable extent. For the literariness of Tusquets's style relies heavily on its exaggerated ornament and on the maximisation of its syntactical premises; its rhetorical flavour derives from its repetitive rhythm, unconventional word order and imaginative lexical choices and combinations. Against this background, Penman's text appears to exhibit a divergent mode of literariness which verges on an academic use of language and which relegates the original's significant sense of poeticity to a negligible role.

A further means for the construction of poeticity in Tusquets's novels is their language's constant reflection of a particularly luxurious view of life, a characteristic which can be said to link to the author's biography. Esther Tusquets has acknowledged her inability to write about worlds and experiences that fall beyond her most immediate social environs: the Catalan bourgeoisie (Tusquets in Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 1991a). To the question of how she finds the time to write by the critic Geraldine Nichols, Tusquets brazenly replied that "Yo creo que en parte es porque no hago nada de la casa. Veo otra gente que en enredos pierde mucho tiempo, en cosas de la casa que yo no hago jamás, jamás (...) Yo nunca en mi vida me he lavado unas bragas, ni he planchado una camisa" (Tusquets in Nichols 1989: 83). Critics have also pointed out the elitist viewpoint from which Tusquetsian narrators speak, a characteristic that arguably links them to the authorial voice: "Esta diferencia se plantea desde el ámbito elitista en Esther Tusquets, cuyas protagonistas o son más inteligentes o más bellas o superiores en algún sentido al resto de los personajes" (Romero 1987: 347).

The text's own exuberant profusion of detail mirrors the female narrator's natural proneness towards luxury as another path for evasion from the acute, real emptiness of their lives. This predilection, which has its bearing on the text, is of course significant from the point of view of the text's own referentiality, as it effectively illustrates the characters' belonging to Barcelona's bourgeoisie, and, above all, as idle, rich women who are, nevertheless, intelligent enough to realise the redundancy of their existence. But the depiction of the luxurious is also another indicator of these characters' predominantly unrealistic, and in this sense, lyrical view of life. In the following extract, for instance, the lexical choices are semantically loaded with a

propensity towards extravagance: the text's poetical flavour is highly increased by the writer's use of "alcoba" (a word reminiscent of magnificent chambers, which is falling out of use in peninsular Spanish) and of "bombones y nardos", which points to the highly specialised gifts with which Clara pampered Elia. The translator's choice of hyperonyms of these words cancels out this sense of specificity and, concomitantly, the poetic depiction of these women's particular routines.

#### EXAMPLE 14:

Y Elia piensa ahora desde una perspectiva nueva, recién adquirida, en esta niña flaca de ojos grandes que la acompaña y la sigue desde hace semanas, desde hace quizá meses, a todas partes, que le hace favores y recados, que le llena **la alcoba de bombones y nardos** [...](EJS: 31)

Elia begins to think again, in the light of the new discovery, about the slim, big-eyed girl who has been following her and accompanying her everywhere for weeks past, if not for months past, doing her little favours and carrying messages, filling **her room with flowers and sweets** [...] (LSG: 28)

In conjunction with the above-mentioned patterns, Tusquetsian lyrical textuality is also bolstered by the writer's recurrent exercise of numerous literary figures, amongst which hyperbole and descriptive prosopopoeia ought to be highlighted. These figures serve to strengthen the view of Tusquets's characters' world as divided into the empirical reality, where there is only room for all-pervasive dreariness, and an alternative, chimerical reality, where the healing potential of true love and the possibility of final freedom never seem to reach exhaustion. Seemingly, the use of these literary figures springs from the character-narrator's capacity for this experiential duality, which, as Geraldine C. Nichols has sensibly analysed, has a direct bearing on textual representation in the author's first novel (Nichols 1992), and whose presence is pervasive in *El amor es un juego solitario* and *Varada tras el último naufragio*. Whether it would be by the compensatory use of abundant literary figures or by the necessary re-creation of a discourse that reads as more imaginary and less referential, it would be absolutely necessary that the English-speaking readership be presented with a fair notion of how important the above-mentioned interplay between tedious reality and hyperbolic illusion is in Tusquets's texts. In the

ensuing extracts, there are examples of poeticity being constructed via literary figures, which are lost in the translation:

EXAMPLE 15:

un polvo fino, ligeramente amargo, que reseca los labios y se adhiere **tenaz** al paladar [...] (EJS: 7)

A fine, slightly bitter dust that dries the lips and clings to the roof of the mouth [...] (LSG: 5)

EXAMPLE 16:

y siempre con la posibilidad además –no por remota menos posible- de que surja inesperado el dato curioso, la vivencia insólita o conmovedora, la experiencia no fabulada ni inventada, en la que **palpita**, entre tantas imágenes de melodrama o de sainete, la chispa de la vida. (EJS: 24)

When they talk about themselves, there is always the possibility, remote as it may seem, that something unexpected will come to light –some curious fact, some unusual or moving event, some genuine, unembroidered experience which stands out from the general run of melodramatic or farcical reminiscence because it possesses the spark of life. (LSG: 22)

EXAMPLE 17:

que algunas veces terribles, sin darse siquiera cuenta de que Clara sudaba de pura angustia y quedaba paralizada y rígida y helada, con una rigidez y frialdad **que evocaban las de la muerte**, le había puesto una mano, siempre temblorosa e insegura, siempre húmeda, siempre fría, sobre el brazo desnudo, contra la nuca tibia, en la rodilla desvalida. (EJS: 60)

There had been one or two terrible occasions when he had put his trembling, insecure, moist, cold hand on her bare arm, her warm neck, or her delicate knee, without even noticing that the contact made her sweat with anguish and fall into a chill, rigid, deathly trance. (LSG: 56)

Bruce Penman's inclination towards a less ornamented discourse is abundantly manifest. By suppressing hyperbolic similes or indeed, many other rhetorical figures to which Tusquets constantly resorts, he significantly downshifts the original's marked stylistic flamboyancy and panache. In doing so, the connection is blurred between style and the socio-psychological disposition of her protagonists, who are able to identify the mechanisms of romantic expectations that cause their all-

embracing sense of disappointment with their lives, but will not effectively break loose from them.

#### 4.2.4 Translating Female Sexuality

So far, we have not analysed Penman's translation of *El amor...* as informed by any particular ideology or partisan agenda. In effect, and to take Kabi Hartman's terminology when contrasting the various extant English translations of *Le Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff*, there do not seem to be any major "ideologically inflected omissions" (Hartman 1999: 65) in his translation. All the irregularities referred to so far could be attributed, rather, to an erroneous appraisal of Tusquetsian distinctive textuality and to the translator's predilection towards an almost immediate, orderly communication of the story line. Granted, this textual strategy has detrimental repercussions in the translation of a text whose stylistic configuration is charged with a functional load, that is, to evoke the kind of literature-laden mental workings of the female narrator-protagonist.

Parallel to this economics of stylistic neutralisation, a further anomaly can be identified when the text plunges into sexuality, as we detect this strategy has been widely applied by the translator at those points where the original's widely celebrated erotic imagery is at its height. In what follows, I will first offer some textual evidence that this exercise of suppression ostensibly takes place. Later, I will try to place Penman's strategy within the several instances of what Louise von Flotow has classified as "patriarchal translation" (von Flotow 1997: 49) and advance a commentary on the occasionally insinuated, yet generally avoided working frame of the male translator of women-centred narratives.

In the following selection of extracts a considerable and suggestive amount of omission and semantic neutralisation has been implemented at those points where Tusquets's forthright, and yet poetical references to the female sexual organ occurred, a step which could be in principle attributed to a rather anachronistic fit of decorum on the part of the translator:

EXAMPLE 18:

fuelle de miel dulcísima sus pezones rosados, lisos, de muchachita, **su sexo tibio**, húmedo, pegajosos y fragante, **su sexo flor en el pantano, su sexo nido, su sexo madriguera, en el que retroceden todos los miedos, este sexo** que es para Ricardo un punto de partida [...] (EJS: 111)

Her pink nipples, smooth as a young girl's, are as sweet as honey, and then there's something warm, moist, clinging and fragrant, like a flower in the marsh where she wandered so long, like a nest, like the lair of an animal, something which takes away all fear. For Ricardo it is a starting point... (LSG: 105)

#### EXAMPLE 19:

Porque muerte y placer son una misma cosa y paradójicamente en la cima del goce la muerte ya no existe, o acaso no la vemos ya a fuerza de presente, **jugoso mar el sexo de mujer abierto a todos los caminos...** (EJS: 113)

(Death and pleasure are one and the same; but, by a strange paradox, death ceases to exist when pleasure reaches its height –or perhaps we cannot see it because it is too close to us, **as we float in the open sea of pleasure.**) (LSG: 107)

*El Amor...* is an explicitly sexual chronicle of desire. From the outset, love is significantly cut off from the scenery and relegated to a virtually spectral position, from which it cannot influence the characters' lives, so engulfed in their own escape from reality. In this context, sex appears in all its forms as a temporary but powerful palliative. And thus, from Elia's initial recollection of a hidden sexual reference in a children's book, to the final episode of the hellish threesome played by the characters, sexual interaction dominates the scene. Further, feminine sexuality is given precedence in the text, and in virtually all of Tusquets's novels, and is enhanced in the narration as an all-embracing force by means of the powerfully poetic drive implemented on the text at these points. The all-importance of this textual physiology in Tusquets's novels was made salient by Margaret E.W. Jones, who in her afterword to the translation states:

The novel recognizes and validates woman's pleasure (clearly differentiating it from male pleasure), deals frankly with female sexuality, depicts homosexuality (particularly between women, another taboo) in a positive light, and reinforces these themes with the erotization of the text itself, through the use of sexual imagery. (Jones 1990: 187)

The extracts above evidence a poetic, joyful energy permeating the text when feminine sexuality is explicitly mentioned: the continuous repetition of the word “sexo” (meaning ‘sexual organ’) in the first example, the rhetoric sequence of adjectives or the metaphoric description of the vagina through the recurrent symbolism of the nouns “flor”, “nido”, “madriguera”, the hyperbolic likening of sexual ecstasy and death, or the unconventional concatenation of words and total absence of punctuation in the powerful “jugoso mar el sexo de mujer abierto a todos los caminos”, all effectively turn the text into a compactly poetical and melodious description of the female sexual organ as source, origin and cause. Rather abruptly, this meaningful lyricism is neutralised in the English translation through the persistent omission of the word “sexo”, replaced by the elusive “something like”. The anaphoric “it” is also inserted, but the reader is given no clue as to what is its referent. In the second example, the extended reference to the female sexual organ is obliterated altogether and replaced by the unsound and rather colourless “as we float in the open sea of pleasure”. There is, all in all, an evident determination either to diffuse or entirely efface a markedly female sexual presence from the text.

Let us assume, not without trouble, that these translational choices are indeed motivated by linguistic seemliness, an option which is, as I have argued, utterly implausible and damaging of a text which has been widely approached as primarily “sexual” and “erotic” (Dolgin 1991; Schumm 1999: 107). Let us surmise the translator is underhandedly trying to obliterate all those explicitly sexual references, with a view to tone down the intensely sexual pitch acquired by the novel at certain points. If this should in fact be the case, then one could justifiably expect that this translational tactics would be implemented consistently whenever an intemperate sexual reference occurred, regardless of its genderedness (that is, regardless of whether the reference alludes to a woman or to a man). If we read a few lines further into his translation, we are provided with the evidence that will annul this hypothesis. In the following description of an act of fellatio, the text persistently maintains the focus on the woman’s angle, to such an extent, in fact, that the sentence verges on ungrammaticality (most of the verbs used are transitive, but their object remains

unstated). Penman's insertion of an explicit reference to the male sexual organ, which was not there in the original, remains, thus unjustifiable:

EXAMPLE 20:

Mientras agita con cuidado entre dos dedos, estrecha luego en la palma de una mano firme y cálida, oprime entre sus pechos, resigue con los pezones erizados, se desliza en la boca –donde se ocultan, como las uñas entre las zarpas de un felino enamorado, los dientes, y donde inicia la lengua un recorrido intenso y vibrátil, que tiene tanto de travesura como de experto y aprendido... (EJS: 112)

As she flipped **his organ** gently between two fingers, squeezed it with a firm, warm hand, pressed it between her breasts, stropped it against her erected nipples, and **finally** slid it into her mouth; her teeth were like the sheathed claws of an affectionate cat, and her tongue moved in an intense, vibrant application, which owed as much to natural virtuosity as to acquired technique... (LSG: 106)

With its purposeful omission of any reference to the male organ, the original passage preserves its focus on the woman's actions. Eroticism is here constructed by the constant reference to Elia's body and to her movements, consigning her male companion to a passive position, to a mode of absence that is here both sexual and textual. The unpredictable explicitation of the recipient of Elia's crafty movements, as well as the syntactical re-structuration of the whole scene, particularly through the insertion of the adverb "finally" when she resorts to her mouth, confers the whole scene with a sense of culminating closure as would be perceived by the male focaliser, a significant change which was not envisaged in the original and which constitutes a serious intervention of the source text.

In her recent analysis of how de Beauvoir's fictional writing was translated into English, Luise von Flotow reaches an analogous conclusion (von Flotow 2000). Unlike the present study, her aim was exclusively to examine references to sexuality in de Beauvoir's fictional writings and the way these were translated into English by Patrick O'Brian. After an exercise of textual juxtaposition, von Flotow detects de Beauvoir's novels have undergone a process of masculinisation of their language, implemented primarily through the translator's semantic choices when dealing with explicitly sexual terms. Oddly, the original *con* or *conneries* become *cunt* and *balls* in the translation (von Flotow 2000: 13). And to those open references to the sexual act in colloquial French, the translator, von Flotow explains, "avails himself of the



euphemistic and more friendly “make love,” but not once does he use “fuck” where the vehemence of Murielle’s monologue would warrant it” (von Flotow 2000: 18). Instead, he resorts to terms such as “stuff”, thus shifting discourse towards a distinctively more “aggressive male perspective” (von Flotow 2000: 18) and reinforcing the patriarchal positional system informed by male activity (or agency) and female passivity (or recipiency) in sexual intercourse. Von Flotow summarises:

It is easy to criticize translations. It is difficult to translate. Keeping this qualification in mind, it is still appropriate to point to the substantial effects that an apparent (and perhaps unconscious) male bias can have on a work such as Beauvoir’s *La femme rompue*. Its vulgarity is heightened through literal translations and male sexual imagery, references to women’s sexuality are misunderstood or misrepresented, and an aging bourgeoisie starts sounding like a British sea captain. (von Flotow 2000: 20)

Studies such as von Flotow’s and the present one cannot skirt along the issue of male translators’ suitability when working with ostensibly women-centred narratives. An issue tentatively but influentially first approached by Barbara Godard in her article “Translating and Sexual Difference” (1984) and Evelyne Voldeng in “Translata/Latus” (1984), it has been the underlying nucleus of several more recent analyses (Henitiuk 1999; Schomp 2002), and touched upon by several others (Massardier-Kenney 1994: 15; de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 101-108).<sup>16</sup> While entirely wary of the danger of falling into an undesired biological determinism (itself the putative chronic blight of certain radical forms of feminist enquiry), these studies generally address the scanty critical dialogue revolving round this issue and the vast ground for research yet to be unearthed and explored in this field. Studying how a male translator can or has interpreted and transposed a woman-centred narrative is, as Claire Schomp has argued, “a most interesting point of intersection” (Schomp 2002: 170), especially at those points where the narrative engages in the representation of a female sexuality, physicality, or psychology. After demonstrating that this site of tension has in fact generated grounds for a considerable amount of misprision in translation, a deduction that the present study is also aimed to support, these studies

---

<sup>16</sup> All the articles indicated deal with this issue via the analysis of literary translations. For an exploratory investigation of several prototypical forms of male bias in translation via linguistic experiments see Friederike Braun’s article “Making Men out of People: The MAN Principle in Translating Genderless Forms” (1997).

move on to the proposal of potential solutions. Their starting point is substantiated in the following explanation by Valerie Henitiuk:

While translators by definition deal with a foreign text on levels of language, culture, and time, the male translator of a woman's text may well encounter a foreignness comprised of sexual difference that he ends up compounding. The language of the male translator is superimposed on the woman's narrative, creating inevitable gender-bending distortions. (Henitiuk 1999: 475)

I would put forward two paths for the pre-emption of this practical quandary, in the belief that what Henitiuk dubs a "phallogtranslator", that is "an inadequate interpreter of women's writing, given an observable reliance on engrained phallogcentric assumptions" (Henitiuk 1999: 473), is in fact a susceptibility attributable to both male and female translators. First, it would seem like a reasonable requirement that any translator engaged in the task of translating a women-oriented work should be suitably conversant with, not only the gender issues inscribed in the text in hand, but also with what Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood terms "the feminist intertext":

By my definition, the feminist intertext is a communicating and resonating collective text scripted in the feminine by feminist rereading and rewriting what other feminists have written or spoken. It is composed of the women's voices and words constantly present in our own voices and words, gynecizing our memories, our imaginations, our actions. By grounding our bodies in a shared reality, we ensure that we needn't start over again every time, that we do have a living history. (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 126)

A translator cognisant of this collective, collaborative background, which would also include, I argue, those critical and scholarly works dealing with gender issues and literary creativity, would stand advantageously before the translational task, as an alert, informed and optimally perceptive interpreter.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, the translator should be ideally aware of his/her own positionality and of his translating activity as inevitably prismatic, and should stretch this realisation on to the readers by initiating and sustaining a dialogue with them. This could be done through several forms of paratextual support and would equip the receiving audience with the informational background necessary to approach the translation exactly as

---

<sup>17</sup> Translation critic Françoise Massardier-Kenney has furthered this most favourable working position by also contemplating the translator's knowledge and dynamic use of, what she calls, "parallel texts", that is, "Texts in the target language which have been produced in a situation similar to that in which the source text was produced." (Massardier-Kenney 1997: 64)

that. Moreover, this paratextual support should ideally go beyond the supply of introductory facts about the author and work in hand (a detectable tendency, in fact, whenever prefaces and afterwords are at all included, which ultimately serves as another form of curtsy to the original), and integrate theoretical and practical considerations springing from the translator's own stance, calling attention towards his/her own pursuits. This practice would have, at least, a doubly beneficial effect. On the one hand, it would render the translation less vulnerable, as it would be bolstered by a mode of critical succour advancing the translator's positionality as well as the possible complications, dilemmas and, doubtless, also the joys of translating the chosen (or commissioned) work. Claire Schomp points to a significant crux regarding this matter, when she avers that:

there are no general guidelines available with which to judge if the translator is, in fact, doing what s/he says s/he is. This sort of critique takes place within academic discourse, which does not reach the same audience as the translated work. Such critique is necessary, however, to sustain discussion and expose assumptions affecting translation production and reception. (Schomp 2002: 166).

Further, it would make the reader less vulnerable, or let us better say, better equipped for the exercise of exposure to newness that the reading of a translated work should ideally entail. Again, in Schomp's words:

Finally, it must be the responsibility of translators and editors to understand how their presentations of texts transmit varying messages, and to undertake to share that informed understanding with their readers. Otherwise, anything goes, and the reader is most certainly *not* 'safe'. (Schomp 2002: 172, emphasis in the original)

Bruce Penman's translation can be said to have taken, whether consciously or not, the more ill-defined, and thus more equivocal, status of translation practice at the time of its publication to his own advantage. The understated, covert modes of distortion it effects on the original, can be divided, as we have seen, into an inclination to neutralise its stylistic contour (feminine in the sense that it invokes the modes of literary entrapment Tusquets's women protagonists suffer from) and to masculinise its treatment of sexuality. The neutral and the masculine converge in a sort of equational correlation (to neutralise is to masculinise) if we take into account that to efface the gendered features of a text is in fact another way of succumbing to

the Man As Norm-Principle that, sociolinguistics informs us, pervades communication.

### 4.3 Conclusion

I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter that Bruce Penman's translation *Love is a Solitary Game* can be viewed as an element of dislocation within the larger picture of Tusquets's translational status into English. In stark contrast with the translations by Margaret E. W. Jones, Susan E. Clark, and Barbara F. Ichiishi, which fluently interlock at most layers of analysis, Penman's text sends off a jarring note. In sum, there is a consistent exercise of lexical and structural neutralisation in his translation, which mutes the pervasive poetic nuances of the original text to a noticeable extent. Tusquets's avowed lyricism and idiosyncratic style are cancelled out in favour of what could be categorised as a more narrative and communicative text. Thus, stylistic opacity is suppressed as information flows orderly and unproblematically in a sequence of structures governed by linearity and organised progression. The interplay between style and content, so distinctive and essential in Tusquets's novels, is minimised. Further, the original's unabashed treatment of sexuality from a woman's perspective is either discounted or deformed: references to female sexual imagery are generally glossed over or infused with a "lexically penetrative" force (Keenaghan 1998: 275).

An additional remark may be made, touching on the absence of a retranslation into English of Tusquets's second novel. As Susam-Sarajeva points out, this is an area virtually uncharted in translation studies:

The non-existence of retranslations under particular circumstances should be given the importance it merits in translation research. This, of course, raises a rather methodological problem, since it is often the existence of things that draws attention, but not otherwise. (Susam-Sarajeva 2002: 166)

By way of conclusion, I would like to offer some arguments favouring the undertaking of a retranslation of this novel. Penman's translation remains an exemplary case of the many translated texts that have been "misrepresented in 'patriarchal translation'" (von Flotow 1997: 49). The strategies implemented respond, whether knowingly or not, to a historically pervasive design aimed at

encoding women's presence and at diffusing their rights to plain volition and agency, be it social, emotional, or sexual. Of equal importance seems to be the dialogical gulf thus breached between critical discourse on the author and the interpretative lines informing this translation. Produced at a time when scholarly interest in peninsular women writers had only just taken off, his translation is today in total dissonance with the pervadingly gender-aware approximations to her work put forward by critics the world over. As is the case with the rest of the authors integrated in this study to a greater or lesser degree, the translational and critical material available to readers stand in a sort of antithetical rapport. Though the prospect of a revamped and gender-aware retranslation to all the texts that currently sit quietly among the books of patriarchy is well-nigh unimaginable (especially when seminal works like de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* continue to be available only in Howard M. Parshley's 1952 translation), a point can still be made out of their unsuitability, even through mediums of restricted access or scope such as the academic one.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> For the first case study of de Beauvoir's English translations, see Simons (1983). More recently, several studies continue to draw attention to the flagrantly interventionist nature of Parshley's translation, issuing a clarion call for its renewal (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 103; Simon 1996: 90-91).

## Chapter 5: Rosa Montero or the Perpetual Feminist: Allegations Old and New about and against her Early Narrative

Of the three authors that constitute the core of this thesis, Rosa Montero has been most frequently subjected to sharp criticism. Having started her literary career (her work as a journalist was well-known and established by then) at a time of immense political and social turmoil, her first novel *Crónica del desamor* (1979) is usually described as a key, but largely weak, hybrid novel that verges on sensationalism on the one hand, or on the political tract, on the other. Further, as the Spanish feminist movement gained its impetus during the years of the transition into democracy and varying woman-centred theories and systems of thought developed abroad made their way into the peninsula, Rosa Montero's work was almost unquestioningly considered a literary amalgam of feminist concerns as put forward by an activist. Here and there, reviews and critical commentary would arise that denounced the novel's alleged lack of literary status: its strong, conspicuous connections with the author's biography (Glenn 1988: 95; Erens 1993: 200), its formless, fickle structure, and a thematic bulk that verged on the vernacular, a mere "lamento íntimo" (Villán 1983, in Reisz 1995: 197), all in all, wanting in objectifiable depth. While the open treatment of women's concerns was customarily dismissed as too belligerent by certain critics, the book became a best-seller overnight and continued to be reprinted in the eighties and nineties.

*Crónica del desamor*, as well as Montero's subsequent novels published in the early eighties, would soon attract attention within Anglo-American scholarship. Rosa Montero featured prominently in numerous articles published in the eighties, whose focus was mainly to report on the so-called Spanish women writers *boom* as it was developing in the country. As has been previously mentioned, an instance of this promotion was the monographic volume of *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* published in 1987, dedicated exclusively to the leading figures of

this boom and its most immediate precursors: Montero's work was prominent enough at the time to feature in two articles within this volume.

Before long a number of books were also published that revolved exclusively around the figure of Montero and her literary trajectory. With a view to elucidating the more or less received appraisals of Montero's work, it may be helpful at this point to cast a glance at those monographic studies published on the author so far.

In 1994, two books with two diametrically opposed stances were published: Alma Amell's *Rosa Montero's Odyssey* and Catherine Davies's *Contemporary Feminist Fiction in Spain: The Work of Monserrat Roig and Rosa Montero*. The former adopts an almost universalist approach to Montero's novels, avoiding any ideological analysis of their content and focusing on a more metaphysical approach to the author's recurrent topics. For Amell, the motor underlying Montero's literary project is to portray human grappling with the passing of time and death, a preoccupation that is never gender-marked in her analysis. In fact, Amell's text is one of the few works on Montero which does not adopt a gender-oriented stance, a feature that puts it into contrast with almost all the subsequent book length publications on the author. Vanessa Knights correctly states in her book that Amell's book's strongest point is her final commentary on humour as one of Montero's literary assets and on the textual construction of this feature (Knights 1999: 4). This final section, indeed the only one springing from stylistic enquiry in the book, elaborates, rather succinctly but tellingly, on issues such as the colloquial register of Montero's *Crónica del desamor*, types of speech representation, and on the possible grounds for the readers' immediate identification with the novel. All these aspects of Montero's work will be granted full attention in the present study.

Davies' text, by contrast, takes on an unabashedly feminist viewpoint. From the outset, she classifies Montero's novels as feminist, even in the writer's non-activist, non-theoretical but "empirical" sense (Davies 1994: 19). She thoroughly engages with Montero's subversive textual technique and stresses the transgressive nature of a novel that was designed more as an outpouring streaming from the author's feminist vision of life than as a neat and well-rounded novel (Montero in Glenn 1990: 279). In retrospective, Davies's analysis stands out for its hailing of *Crónica del desamor* on

its own terms, as an “emancipatory” (Davies 1994: 181), revolutionary novel published at a time of necessary social unrest in Spain. Her position differs widely from the most generalised, current appraisal of Montero’s first novel as a work of dubious status.

In 1999 two further books on Montero came to the fore: Haydée Ahumada Peña’s *Poder y género en la narrativa de Rosa Montero* and Vanessa Knights’s *The Search for Identity in the Narrative of Rosa Montero*. Ahumada Peña’s study aims to incorporate a Foucaultian approach to Montero’s literary project. From the outset, the focus appears to be directed towards the recognition and explication of the mechanisms of power negotiations as they are revealed in what she terms “escritura marginal” (Ahumada Peña 1999: 27), a term which, the reader infers, will be used to describe Montero’s work. As the analysis progresses, however, the connections between the author’s initial introduction to Foucault’s thought and her study of Montero’s literary trajectory up to *La hija del caníbal* (1997) become rather tenuous. The text is noticeably restricted to thematic commentary and offers very little insight into the issue of the possible transgressive thrust originating in the voice of the marginalised subject (women, the insane), and of the way this relates to Montero’s own project. Ahumada-Peña’s study appears to fall prey to the increasingly widespread tendency to integrate an influential (usually also fashionable) philosophical apparatus with literary commentary on a particular author in a manner that appears ultimately forced and fragmentary.

Vanessa Knights’s study engages in the welcome enterprise of trying to examine Montero’s novels on their own terms, in the light of Spanish literary criticism and cultural studies. With a view to elucidating the correlation between Montero’s literary trajectory and the development of the Spanish feminist movement, from their initial concern with gender equality as the ultimate aspiration to their gradual steering towards the recognition of gender-specific differences, Knights produces a solidly documented analysis that attempts to remain faithful, above all, to Montero’s own agenda. Perhaps the book’s weakness lies in its scant treatment of style, an absence that becomes all the more patent in a study that sets out to discuss the use of discourse in the construction of identity.



A further monographic study of Montero's work, the last one to date, came out in 2000.<sup>19</sup> Mary C. Harges's *Synergy and Subversion in the Second Stage Novels of Rosa Montero* substantiates what has become a widely accepted perception of Montero's literary trajectory, namely, that there is a sharp contrast between her first two novels *Crónica del desamor* (1979) and *La función Delta* (1981), and her subsequent production, in terms of stylistic sophistication, thematic complexity and overall depth and ambition. In order to bolster this opinion, to which Montero herself has frequently owned (Montero in Glenn 1990: 279; Montero in Escudero 1997: 332-333; Montero in Knights 1998: 78), Harges ascribes negative connotations to such labels as "realistic" or "journalistic" (Harges 2000: 4, 117), customarily used to describe Montero's early novelistic production, and identifies the fantastic slant of the more recent works as a sign of the author's maturation and acquired experience. While this assumption appears to be utterly unproblematic, particularly in the light of Montero's professed detachment from her first novel, Harges's point of departure raises a number of questions as to why qualifiers such as 'realistic', 'autobiographic', or 'testimonial' have acquired derogatory overtones in Montero's case, and, more generally, when applied to women's literature.

Many commentators have in fact subscribed to Harges's focus on Montero's second-stage novels, on the grounds that they are the result of the author's greater literary ambition and more accomplished technical mastery. This critical position can already be found in those early assessments of Montero's novels, usually found in journalistic reviews of her books, where her first two novels were dismissed in the light of her more polished (usually meaning 'less autobiographical') *Te trataré como a una reina* (1983). The following reviews embrace this reasoning:

En esta de ahora ya es posible hablar de verdadera creación novelística –lo que muy acertadamente los anglosajones denominan "fiction"–, de la puesta en marcha de un universo autónomo que poco o nada tiene que ver, en sus características y mecanismos reguladores, con la peripecia humana de la propia autora. Creo que Rosa Montero ha conseguido lo que se había propuesto desde el principio sin lograrlo. (Saladrigas 1983, in Reisz 1995: 197)

---

<sup>19</sup> Probably, the next book-length volume on the author will be Javier Escudero's *La narrativa de Rosa Montero: Hacia una ética de la esperanza*, whose publication is currently being considered by several publishing houses.

*Te trataré como a una reina* –el título parece casi de Manuel Puig, el rey del kitsch– es, por lo tanto, hablando en puridad, la primera novela de Rosa Montero, su primer intento serio, deliberado y esforzadamente trabajado, de crear una obra separada de la propia autora, un mundo objetivado, exterior, donde una serie de personajes se mueven por sí solos para crear una fábula que parece decidirse con independencia de la voluntad del autor. (Conte 1983, in Reisz 1995: 197)

While it is not difficult to identify the condescending and paternalistic tone in these reviews (the one that underlies the generalised view that women writers are incapable of fictional creation and which, by the same token, inferiorises ‘typically feminine’ genres such as autobiography, the diary, or confessional writing), their explicit reference to Montero’s first novels *Crónica del desamor* and *La función Delta* as, in fact, non-novels, has endured in the analysis of recent, more apt and less biased literary critics. The onus is usually placed on Montero’s fifth novel *Temblor* (1990) as the work that substantiates what Vanessa Knights termed a necessary “leap of imagination” (Knights 1999: 170), a sort of unavoidable and much needed step forward in women’s literature’s evolution from a mere reportorial function to one exploratory of unsettled and renewed images of women. Studies such as those by Thomas R. Franz (1993) or Anne C. Hardcastle (2000) elaborate on this much-quoted turning point in Montero’s literary trajectory, which has its basis in an undeniable alteration in the author’s production, but which, more often than not, is understood in terms of a progression, an improvement emerging from the abandonment of her more subversive, early literary formulae, in the benefit of a novelistic production which, as Catherine Davies asserts, is “more readily accepted into the literary canon” (Davies 1994: 176). What these studies frequently disguise, however, is a distaste for those early works of Montero which, by sheer belligerence and overtness, verged on the propagandistic (Myers 1988), and a preference for more complex, universal (in fact, more covertly feminist) literary creations. To put it in Hardcastle’s parlance when analysing *Temblor*:

With this novel, Montero exchanges the irony, verbal word-play and girls’ club type humour for a metaphysical edge that explores the condition of (human) being rather than engendered political states. (Hardcastle 2000: 434)

The present study focuses on Montero’s early novels: *Crónica del desamor* (1979) and *La función Delta* (1981) with a view to clarifying two main aspects of the way her work has been diffused internationally, particularly, through Anglo-American

scholarship and translation. First, I will try to show that several customary assertions made on her (early) work have been often taken at face value and only very seldom been subjected to constructive scrutiny. These recurrent observations (usually thrown in as introductory annotations to larger studies) primarily revolve round three assumptions about Montero's work, namely: 1) that her early novels may embrace the possibility of a typically feminine writing mode as was put forward by mainly French theorists in the seventies; 2) that her style in these novels, and particularly in *Crónica del desamor*, is eminently documentary and journalistic and 3) that her texts are characteristically humorous and highly ironic.

All three perceptions are evidently linked to stylistic considerations. They all trigger off, however, a number of stylistic enquiries that have only seldom been unswervingly addressed: what is it about Montero's early writings that made some critics establish the connection between the novels *Crónica...* and *La Función...*, and the eminently stylistic concept of *écriture féminine*? What does the adjective *journalistic* mean when applied to Rosa Montero's fictional writing and why should it acquire the derogatory connotations that many critics have attached to it? In what ways is irony constructed in Montero's texts and what function does it fulfil? By way of trying to answer these questions, I will draw closer to a further platitudinous and also insufficiently investigated comment on Montero's early work, namely, that her novels are exemplary instances of an extraordinary phenomenon of reader identification (only paralleled recently by novels such as *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* (1997) by Lucía Etxebarria). The thrust of the present and the following chapter is, thus, to recapture and reclaim the significance of two novels that have been ultimately brushed aside as inferior by academic researchers, and yet have been the only ones selected for translation into English thus far. My exposition will have two main objectives: first, to try to investigate by means of primarily stylistic enquiry the three main observations about Montero's work that have been seemingly taken for granted, in the belief that it is precisely in these three aspects of her early works that the importance and subversiveness of her early literary project lies: this will be the aim of the present chapter. Second, I will try to explain why, value judgments aside, Montero's first two novels have reached such a wide readership and how their

most essential and characteristic features have been relayed in their English translations *Absent Love: A Chronicle* (1991) and *The Delta Function* (1991). In the course of Chapter 6, I will try to demonstrate that precisely those features in the early novels that effected the readers' identification with both their content and style (the ironic use of language, the extolling of ordinary life as the main thematic bulk, or the unconcealed exposition of specifically female worries and experiences) constitute the main sites of tension between original and translated works.

For more than two decades now, Rosa Montero's novelistic trajectory has been the object of critical praise and vituperation alike. A writer who for some commentators is an overrated author, for others constitutes a key figure in Spanish contemporary writing and an almost defining component of the literature of the Transition. Her work has been susceptible to variable labelling, from feminist (Zatlin 1987; Davies 1994; Knights 1999), constructively populist (Reisz 1995) or postmodernist (Hardcastle 2000), to anti-feminist (Manteiga 1988) or plain "easy literature" (Ciplijauskaitė 1988: 192). In the present study I will consider the validity of these categorisations but, above all, I will address the validity of those labels which have been taken as unquestionable starting points. Given that Montero's novels are ineluctable in a study of contemporary Spanish women writing, my aim is to reach an understanding of their most intrinsic and defining features with a view to reclaiming the strategically subversive importance of these two novels, even if they may lie closer to 'pleasure' than to 'bliss' in Barthesian terms.

Barthes' aphoristic explanation of the difference between *texts of pleasure* and *texts of bliss* was articulated mainly in *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975). Whilst this distinction becomes slightly more nebulous towards the end of the book, it finds its genesis at the mutually exclusive reader reactions of either echoic identification with the recognisable or stupefying shock at the new. To put it in his own illuminating terms:

Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Texts of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (Barthes 1975: 14, emphasis in the original)

This dichotomy, or more importantly, the attribution of quasi-suprematist<sup>20</sup> values to the text of bliss, as opposed to the supposedly facile and untroubled experience of reading (and for that matter, also writing) a text of pleasure, may obliquely explain why certain critics have curled their lips at Montero's first novels and at their popularity. The following words by Ana María Moix, who is here poignantly censuring that mode of specular literature, pertinently substantiate this view:

Indudablemente, al lector medio le encanta hallar facilidad en los libros que lee, y nada más fácil y digerible que una somera copia de su propia vida y de sus propios deseos tal cual se desarrollan en la realidad en la que vive, sin transposiciones que requieran por su parte ningún tipo de imaginación. Si esa mera copia de la propia vida –mental o activa– llega adornada con la etiqueta de obra literaria, el lector queda lógicamente agradecido y halagado. (Moix 1992: 203)

Beyond the meritocratic implications the distinction between pleasure and bliss may at first present, it is Barthes's own critical devotion to the gratifying embracement of all modes of cultural produce that I find serviceable when approaching texts like Montero's *Crónica*.... His accommodating gaze, or as Susan Sontag put it, his "joyful wisdom or gay science [...] in which one does not have to choose between good and bad, true and false" (Sontag 1983: xxiii) was key to the emergence in the seventies of new disciplines and fields of enquiry that are today academically established, as Dick Hebdige acknowledged in his study of British subcultures (urban tribes) (Hebdige 1979: 10). His analytical integration of other cultural texts such as films, food, or fashion provided an alleyway for the critical consideration of those forms of culture conventionally classified as unworthy of scholarly attention. It is precisely this cancellation of the differences between major and minor forms of art, consistently practised by Barthes and often performed by cultural critics thenceforth, that I believe a study of Montero's first novels calls for.

---

<sup>20</sup> The link here suggested with Russian suprematist art is not adventitious. An abstractionist movement characterised by the use of stark, geometrical shapes, it further aimed to attain or simulate a sense of unalloyed spiritual purity akin in some sense to Barthes' own notion of ecstasy and bliss through literary recreation.

## 5.1 Rosa Montero and Feminism: The Question of Feminine Writing

In an interview with Vanessa Knights in 1993, Rosa Montero rejects those works of criticism which seem to try to accommodate the work of art to the critical apparatus, in an exercise of inverted academic analysis. In particular, Montero refers to her dislike of this allegedly cooperative mode of feminist criticism, which she considers ultimately intrusive and destructive. To put it in her words:

Pero de lo que estoy en contra, y además me saca de quicio, me pone enferma y me parece ridículo, y me parece la antítesis de lo que es la creación y de lo que es incluso el feminismo, es esta estúpida crítica supuestamente radical feminista que desbarra, que no hace más que utilizar por otro lado también un mimetismo con el “namedropping” del varón, que dice tonterías y fuerza las cosas hasta el extremo. Yo he recibido libros, trabajos sobre mis obras ridículos, verdaderamente ridículos, cogiendo las cosas y forzándolas para hacer una tesis feminista absurda. Es decir, primero tienen la tesis y luego da igual, adaptan el libro. Eso no, eso no es científico, eso no es feminista, eso no es inteligente y eso no es creativo. (Montero 1993, in Knights 1999: 233)

As was pointed out in the introduction, Rosa Montero’s work has almost invariably been subjected to feminist modes of critical enquiry, regardless of the author’s documented detachment from the activist or militant, in her own parlance ‘radical’, side of feminist activity. The author’s own positioning towards ideologically inflected writing (be it critical or creative) remains, however, ambivalent and slightly contradictory. In an earlier interview with Javier Escudero, the writer already professes her profound distaste of feminist theory, of which she says: “me aburre hasta extremos inconcebibles” (Montero in Escudero 1997: 336). When asked about the accustomed classification of her work as feminist, she almost snappily states:

¿Por qué no se califica a los hombres, con los muchísimos que hay en la literatura, de escritores machistas? Yo me considero feminista como persona pero no creo en la narrativa utilitaria, la odio, me parece que es una verdadera traición. Abomino de la narrativa utilitaria, ya sea pacifista, ecologista, socialista, feminista, y todos los “istas” que sea, aunque yo me considere ecologista, pacifista y feminista, pero eso no tiene nada que ver. Soy feminista y además soy latina y urbana y tengo cuarenta y cinco años. Y todo eso son influencias de mi vida que recaen sobre mi obra, como otras miles de cosas más. (Montero in Escudero 1997: 336)

Later on in the same interview, however, she goes on to explain how the idea of her essayistic publication *Historias de mujeres* (1995) germinated and her words bespeak the underlying thrust of an eminently feminist project:

Tengo una librería con bastantes libros de biografías, de hombres y de mujeres, que he ido acumulando durante bastantes años, sobre todo de escritores y, algo menos, de artistas. Entonces, ya que yo disfrutaba mucho leyéndolas, se me ocurrió que podría hacer algún libro que reflejara esa parte de mí. Pero claro, había que acotar el campo. Entonces decidí que mejor mujeres porque son más sorprendentes, porque sabemos mucho menos de ellas, porque somos las silenciadas, las grandes olvidadas y así podría añadir algo más. (Montero in Escudero 1997: 339)

To judge from her words above, it could be inferred that Montero's positioning towards feminist literary writing hovers unsteadily between her reluctance to be pinned down as a writer committed to woman-centred polemics, together with the concomitant feared ghettoisation that would ensue from it (Montero in Escudero 1997: 336), and the ineluctability of her own political and social awareness when taking up the pen. However, her views remain rather adamant when it comes to the consideration of the widely accepted feminist approach to her works articulated mainly by Anglo-American academia. While she does not seem to jettison systematically all studies coming from an overtly feminist standpoint, she is rather intransigent with those analysts whose main goal seems to be to validate a given theoretical apparatus (be it their own or an influential one, usually in vogue) by dint of tailoring the literary work and making it adjust to the tenets of that theory. This unfortunately common practice does a disservice both to the theoretical backbone applied and the creative work studied, whose link remains none the clearer and ultimately, artificially fabricated or forced, to the reader.

My approach to Montero's early narrative tries to ascribe a feminist quality to them, precisely in the belief that the author's later disowning of these novels goes hand in hand with her reiteration of the fact that she is not to be taken as a feminist writer exclusively. The tensions that underpin this evolution need to be understood not only in a context of local, rampant mediatic demonisation of anything susceptible of being labelled as feminist (usually the reason adduced by Anglo-American scholars for many Spanish writers' distancing from the term), but also in the unaccommodating critical milieu thus created, where many authors will demand, and Montero's words

above betray this view, that their works be analysed under a factual, impartial, 'scientific' light which will approach their writing as an all-round work of inspired creativity and not as partisan or committed to a particular political cause. Through a cursory glance at her early works, it becomes undeniable that the overriding goal of her novels *Crónica del desamor* and *La función Delta* was not only to articulate an exposition of women's lives through love, solitude, and loss, but also to take patriarchal strictures as a springboard for her undeniable urge for critique. Her works thus respond to both the characteristics of exposition and denouncement, all in all, consciousness-raising methods, typical of committed feminist literature. Montero's later distancing from what she dubs a utilitarian approach to literature reinforces the interpretation of her first novels as precisely that type of insurgent narratives. However, my opening gambit is that there exist many studies on her novels which, as it were, whittle down the creative work in order to make it suit a given theoretical frame as well as the critic's own convictions, a practice which needs not in principle be censured, but which may yield obtrusive critical misprisions. This is, as was previously suggested, a potential snag in Ahumada Peña's study, and a problem also in the articles I am about to analyse, where issues touching on Montero's views on feminism and the possibility of her early novel's embodying French projections of feminine writing are tackled. Let us first turn to an early article by Roberto Manteiga that exemplarily encapsulates the kind of veiled hostility towards belligerently feminist texts, a reaction that women authors such as Montero try to forestall by denying that very classification.

Roberto Manteiga's 'The Dilemma of the Modern Woman: A Study of the Female Characters in Rosa Montero's Novels' (1988) sets out to demonstrate that Montero's engagement with feminism is, in truth, one based on suspicion and mistrust of its basic tenets. He asserts that Rosa Montero should in fact not be considered a feminist writer "in the same sense as some of her more militant contemporaries" (Manteiga 1988: 114), on the grounds that the female characters she depicts are women who have tried to adopt a feminist stance in life and have had to pay dear for it. His article reveals increasingly what develops as Manteiga's, and not Montero's, own view of feminism as a blight on modern society, a rather dispensable socio-political



movement that has put an unnecessary strain on heterosexual relationships and which has shifted both men and women out of their natural, inherited domain.

Several of his observations, like the following, betray a reactionary attitude to societal change, which he conceals behind a series of adulatory remarks towards the figure of Montero as a journalist:

Her outspokenness and sensitivity to these issues have earned her the respect of her peers on the staff of *El País* as well as the admiration of her readers, although there are many who take umbrage with her rather liberal views. (Manteiga 1988: 114)

The negative use of the word “liberal” above is in fact the key to understand Manteiga’s critical stance. Through a series of personal assumptions on Montero’s individual system of beliefs, he inches ahead with his own argument, namely that:

If Montero is resentful of a society that has relegated women to subservient roles, she is equally critical of the feminist movement itself in so far as it has had a somewhat dehumanizing effect on women. [...] Montero believes that in their attempt to achieve equality, women have, in effect, lost their identity, and, in turn, their ability to communicate their true feelings. (Manteiga 1988: 115)

Feminism is portrayed here as a destructive and insidious phenomenon, one that has upset the traditional man-to-woman relation as has been understood throughout history by generations and generations of satisfied spouses. Once the feminist maxims have been adopted or assimilated by society (Manteiga seems to be of the opinion that the feminist movement had by 1988 achieved all its prescribed goals) men and women, though in Manteiga’s view, especially women, will be condemned to a life of ostracism and lack of communication with their peers, simply because their traditional identity, understood here as an overarching point of reference, will have been unsettled:

In an attempt to free themselves from their traditional role as the weak and submissive gender in a male-dominated society, they accede to peer pressure and adopt a feminist posture, only to come to the realization that this assumed and unnatural behavior on their part has discouraged or prevented them from formulating meaningful relationships, especially with men. As a result these women suffer frustration and loneliness. (Manteiga 1988: 116-117)

Strikingly enough, Manteiga asserts this hellish existence of isolation and failure is well deserved by those women who, like Montero’s characters, dare to question,

more or less undauntedly, their natural and congenital position in society. The utmost punishment is their status as perpetually single women:

In the case of all three women –and they themselves are painfully aware of this– their sense of loneliness and frustration is a product of their own making. By shunning traditional values and patterns of behavior, and adopting instead a feminist posture, Ana, Lucía and Bella have camouflaged their true feelings as women, and this, in turn, has made communication with men difficult. As a result, marriage has not worked for any of them. (Manteiga 1988: 119)

Manteiga's article reaches unsuspected levels of paternalism and critical opportunism when he begins to ascribe a series of ideas to Montero (not the author or the journalist, but the individual) and leaves this connection undocumented. Surreptitiously, he is elaborating on his own ideas but finds it more befitting to buttress them through the words and works of much esteemed authors like Carmen Martín Gaité. The opinions he attributes to this writer seem, however, apocryphal and are left undocumented:

It is here, with respect to her views on marriage, where Rosa Montero departs significantly from other "feminist" writers. [...] Rosa Montero's ideas about marriage are much closer to those writers like Carmen Martín Gaité. She believes that happiness can only come from a strong and lasting, open and sincere relationship with a man, and like Martín Gaité, criticizes women who out of sheer egotism, refuse to marry, have children, or make any other similar types of commitments. These women neither improve their position in society nor gain any real sense of security, but discover instead isolation and abandonment. (Manteiga 1988: 119)

Manteiga's argument is thoroughly unjustified, as well as redolent of an old-fashioned and sexist view of society and human relationships. He defends marriage and motherhood as the ultimate goal and social function for women, and does not hesitate framing this view in a restrictedly heterosexual structure. His words acquire an almost threatening register when talking about those women who have chosen to confront fixed societal strictures as they were passed on to them by the preceding generations, a hostility that he endeavours to channel towards Montero's fictional characters but which is visibly his own hostility towards change. The article's conclusion seems to express some form of convergence with Montero's literary project as was put forward by himself:

Rosa Montero's characters vividly represent the complexities of what it means to be a woman in today's society. Unlike the writings of some of her more militant feminist

contemporaries, Montero offers a sensitive, understanding, and perceptive analysis of the subject that inspires feelings of compassion in all of us. (Manteiga 1988: 123)

In sum, the article's general objective seems to be to caution women against taking up 'unnatural' feminist positions or to do so at their own peril. More aggravatingly, however, Manteiga attributes this view to Montero both as an individual and as a writer of fiction, in a questionably academic turn. This type of studies, which are currently rather rare, nonetheless served to spread the view that feminism was a deceptive trap for those women who adopted its maxims. It is therefore not surprising that women authors taking up the pen in order to identify and denounce the workings of patriarchal discrimination, nevertheless felt exasperatingly cautious and dismissive of the label itself when asked to name their affiliation, a phenomenon that some critics have signalled as distinctive of the Spanish literary scene, or else turned to the practice of a tentatively termed 'posfeminismo', as in the case of more recent writers such as Marina Mayoral or Mercedes Abad (Cornejo-Parriego 2003: 607). This 'posfeminismo' should be understood as a form of transgression of both reactionary and progressive gender-centred maxims. In other words, it is a practice aimed at simultaneously defying conventional patriarchal postulates on the one hand, and "la corrección política feminista" (Cornejo-Parriego 2003: 604) on the other, with a view to leaving both the diehard sexist and the outright feminist in a state of quizzical unsettledness.<sup>21</sup> The point should be insisted upon, however, that Manteiga is not basing his argument on a postfeminist reading of Montero's early narratives (including *Te trataré como a una reina*). His is not a stance beyond, but against feminism, and I believe it is this kind of study that makes a claim for a forthright embracing of not only this admittedly loaded label, but of the still valid principles, methods and goals that it represents.

A different trend of literary criticism on Montero's work developed in parallel in the eighties, which aimed to enhance, if tentatively, its connections with French feminism. Above all, the possibility was announced of Montero's novels' potential embracing of a specifically feminine writing mode as was propounded and practiced

---

<sup>21</sup> Tensions such as these are most visibly at work in, for instance, critics' reception to the films of Pedro Almodóvar. For an approximation to the *feminismo/postfeminismo* dichotomy in his films

by French feminist writers and philosophers. This type of studies spring from an opposing critical stance to that of Roberto Manteiga and other detractors of the feminist movement and of its supporters; their objective is, conversely, to promote and legitimise certain works of fiction by studying them in relation to a leading theoretical apparatus, be it influential or plain polemical, like French feminism and their focal contribution to theory, *écriture féminine*, have proven.

The two main supporters of Rosa Montero's first novels as reminiscent of French feminist theory are Elizabeth Ordóñez and Elena Gascón Vera. In a series of publications (Ordóñez 1987, 1988: Gascón Vera 1987, 1992), they argue for an admittedly elusive but traceable link between the various theories of femininity as put forward by, mainly, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig and certain Spanish women authors writing during the Transition. These writers, they argue, have been influenced by French feminist thought and embrace a number of its prescribed goals, namely, to sabotage and dismantle patriarchal myths of femininity and to create the concept of womanhood anew; to strengthen the specifically female experience of motherhood and to consolidate the centrality of the mother-daughter bond in human relationships; and, ultimately, to render discourse free of patriarchal restraints and thus free women of a thwarted writing/speaking position.

Though several Spanish women authors of the Transition have been studied as receptive to these aims (Ordóñez proposes an analysis of Carme Riera's *Una primavera para Doménico Guarini* (1981), Carmen Gómez Ojea's *Otras mujeres y Fabia* (1982), and Lourdes Ortiz's *Urraca* (1982) as literary attempts to subvert "patriarchal or phallic myths" (Ordóñez 1988: 8) and to foment a woman-oriented form of mythopoeia), the focus is customarily directed towards the early works of Esther Tusquets and Rosa Montero when substantiation for the thesis of a possible peninsular *écriture féminine* is sought. Ordóñez, for example, talks about Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978) and Montero's *La función Delta* (1981) as two literary attempts to "write the body" (Ordóñez 1987), a summons first articulated by Cixous and which became a quintessential motto of French feminist thought. Gascón Vera, on the other hand, puts forward an analysis of Montero's first two

---

see Patricia Hart's 'Can a Good feminist Sit through Kika? Rape, Recovery, and Submission

novels as noticeably attuned to Cixousian theories of communication between man and woman, and sexuality (1987, 1988). But both studies, I will argue, skirt around the notion of style and propound the equation Montero-*écriture féminine* in largely thematic terms. Let us analyse them closely.

In her article 'Inscribing Difference: "*L'écriture féminine*" and New Narrative by Women' (1987), Ordóñez proposes examples of connections between French feminist thought and various Spanish novels of the Transition written by women, mainly touching on the questions of myth recreation, the quest for and consolidation of matrilineal roots and, finally, as she says, "the supplemental discursive properties of the female body" (Ordóñez 1987: 49). It is this last aspect of her analysis that concerns us here, for it exemplifies the recurrent emergence of a rather problematic *modus operandi*, namely that an eminently stylistic construct such as *écriture féminine* can be more or less unproblematically substantiated through thematic evidence. Ordóñez's statement, when examining Tusquets's *El mismo mar...*, that: "The writing out of Elia's boundless sexuality is analogous, throughout the trilogy, with the text's own infinite syntax, a syntax clearly related to the female body in ways imagined by French feminism" (Ordóñez 1987: 53), cannot be transposed to her analysis of Montero's *La función Delta*, a novel written in a more unobtrusive style. Still, the critic analyses both texts at the same level and ventures an interpretation of Montero's second novel as a textual inscription of the female body. Her reasons for doing so are summarised in the following words:

The voice of the female body as it lies dying is permitted the luxury of reliving the apprenticeship, mastery and ripeness of female-defined sexuality. Lucía's lovers, past and present (Hipólito, Miguel, and Ricardo), roughly correspond to these three stages; and as accomplice, fellow adventurer, and loving companion respectively, each man grapples with the text of woman's body. Hipólito largely misreads Lucía and her intentions; Miguel reads Lucía's body and her desires with an open tenderness; Ricardo reads Lucía's text (and her body) with irreverential yet affectionate honesty. (Ordóñez 1987: 54)

While the reasons for attributing Tusquets's distinctive textuality to a conscious convergence with the tenets of feminine writing are articulated through stylistic commentary (even if rather succinct), the reasons for doing so with Montero's *La*

---

Fantasies in the Films of Almodóvar' (1997).

*función Delta* do not engage with formal considerations. Ordóñez switches to a series of ambivalent comments on the protagonist's story line and emotional liaisons, making use of the words "body" and "text" almost interchangeably and never committing herself to a plausible elucidation of the ways in which Montero's style could be considered a transgressive, textual echo of female corporeality or sexuality.

Gascón Vera's study suffers from the same inconsistency. In this case, however, the contrast between theoretical apparatus and practical application is sharper. Gascón Vera begins her analyses (both the article and the book length publication explicating her thesis) with an insightful introduction to French feminist theory and to the ascendancy of Derridean and Lacanian thought over the construction of a specifically female standpoint and voice. Her exposition of this theoretical apparatus places great stress on its implications for style and on its promulgation of the necessity of "una nueva forma de escribir" (Gascón Vera 1992: 66), with particular emphasis on the indispensability of this discursive revolution for women's liberation. Gascón Vera dedicates considerable length in her study to the examination of Cixous's own style as the embodiment of that linguistic revolt which will make room for a feminine form of identification with language. In Gascón Vera's parlance:

Su lengua valora lo irracional, la fluidez verbal, quiere que la escritura femenina reafirme las características estilísticas del discurso femenino: exageración, excesiva fluidez, lenguaje sin forma, irracionalidad, intuición, sentimentalismo, rechazo de las jerarquías y del poder. Características todas ellas que han sido, tradicionalmente vituperadas y entereotipadas por el discurso masculino predominante. (Gascón Vera 1987: 62)

The point is further pressed for an observable identification with female body and text:

Hélène Cixous cree que, a través de un énfasis en las diferencias femeninas y de un ensalzamiento de las peculiaridades del cuerpo femenino y su corolario, sexualidad, maternidad y gestación, plasmado todo ello en el discurso, las mujeres podrán destruir con su escritura el actual dominio falocéntrico de la lengua y de la cultura. (Gascón Vera 1987: 62)

When she turns to analyse Montero's early novels in the light of the above theoretical apparatus, her study ceases to consider stylistic modes of subversion (like those defended and practised by Cixous herself) and focuses invariably on these novels' thematic bulk. She concentrates mainly on the ways Montero's characters represent

or counteract Cixousean theories of communication between the sexes and her proposition of perfect interaction through an overcoming of prescribed gender roles. For substantiation of her position (that Montero does in fact subscribe in her literary creation to Cixous's theories of perfect love and communication through an ideal embracing of sexual ambiguity and openness) she analyses characterisation devices and the depiction of momentous love scenes in her novels. She proposes, for instance, an interpretation of Lucía's sexual encounters with Miguel (in her thirties) and Ricardo (about to turn sixty and in her hospital bed) in *La función Delta* as illustrative cases of perfect, inter-generic, emotional and sexual flow as they could have been advanced by Cixous:

En las dos escenas, el hombre y la mujer se esfuerzan por darse y comunicarse, por fundirse el uno en el otro. Es este derramarse, este intercambiar de cuerpos (que Cixous considera una facultad esencialmente femenina, pero accesible a algunos hombres) lo que produce el milagro de la comunicación. Las dos escenas, narradas desde el punto de vista de la mujer, son un claro ejemplo de la sensualidad femenina deseosa de una compenetración absoluta. (Gascón Vera 1987: 66)

Like Ordóñez, she also puts forward an identification between the female body and discourse, but leaves the question of how this correlation is textually articulated unaddressed:

En estas descripciones resalta también, de forma paralela al feminismo de las francesas, el afán de equiparar, en un nivel simbólico, el discurso femenino con el cuerpo femenino y su sexualidad y conseguir la eliminación del predominio logocéntrico masculino a través del intercambio de cuerpos. (Gascón Vera 1987: 67)

Gascón Vera's study attempts to articulate what appears to be an impracticable identification from the outset. Starting with an illustrative introduction to French feminist thought and its focus on stylistic transgression with a view to fragment (patriarchal) language, and taking up the much stereotyped, but still eminently theoretical, stylistic concept of *écriture féminine*, Gascón Vera then fails to establish a convincing connection between the implemented theoretical apparatus and the analysed fictional work. Because her study never tackles Montero's work in stylistic terms, the reader is left with a compelling sensation of dialectical mismatch. One indeed wonders what line of thought compels the critic to conclude that Montero tries in her novels to "encontrar una voz femenina propia y diferente del discurso

masculino” (Gascón Vera 1987: 73) when discursive analysis was, in fact, never broached.

Without suggesting that this is in fact a generalised trend in literary criticism, the number of studies that fall prey to this mode of analytical distortion or convenient adjustment of the object of study is enough to make a point. While consciously avoiding implementing French feminist tenets, or indeed any critical apparatus alien to peninsular literary creation and criticism in its own terms, Vanessa Knights’s study suffers from a similar mode of inconsistency. As was said in the introduction, her text aims at the explication of how identity (manifestly, female identity as this lies at the core of Montero’s literary project) is constructed through, and by means of, discursive elaboration. She maintains that Montero’s narrative has drawn from a number of discursive practices that range from an initial testimonial realism (*Crónica del desamor*, *La función Delta*) to miscellaneous pastiche (*Te trataré como a una reina*) and fantasy (*Temblor*), all of them understood in a context of feminist polemics and with a view to subverting fixed, patriarchal images of women and to promoting more pliable and accommodating frames of reference. Her tracing of this trajectory, which she understands as a fictional echo of the Spanish feminist movement’s progression from a debate over gender equality to a more complex, sophisticated elucidation (and celebration) of feminine difference, does not however delve into much stylistic commentary. Again, her conclusion as to Montero’s work being a “recuperation of a *palabra de mujer* which attempts to go beyond the opposition of masculine and feminine” (Knights 1999: 222) does not follow from her analysis.

In the present chapter, I would like to propose an interpretation of Montero’s early work as certainly feminist, but not adherent to the French feminist project of a female appropriation and re-creation of language. There is little evidence in Montero’s style that would point towards a French feminist reading, inasmuch as the subversive writing mode she practises does not abide by the recommendations and precepts of extreme syntactic distension, semantic incongruity or a quasi-corporeal fluidity of discourse (simply to name a few), advanced and implemented by French writers, philosophers, and theorists trying to displace the confines of language, culture, and



gnosis in the heyday of post-structuralism. However, Montero's style in her first novel, generally acknowledged to be the most explicitly subversive, and still visibly so in the second one, does put into practice a number of discursive strategies aimed at unsettling patriarchal knowledge and means of expression. This is not a novel statement, but one that has customarily been substantiated through thematic analysis, in what is a paradoxical turn of critical parlance, and a recurrent one in the field of gender studies and Hispanism.

In the next two sections, I will analyse two frequent comments on Montero's style that have seldom been substantiated or elaborated upon, namely: the much criticised journalistic or documentary format of *Crónica del desamor* and the ironic slant permeating this novel. I believe this is where the novel's subversive force, and one that has been searched for in her more recent work to little avail, resides most clearly.

## **5.2 Journalism and Fiction: The Construction of a Veracious Reality**

The description of Rosa Montero's narrative as exhibiting a journalistic, documentary style (in fact only palpably present in *Crónica del desamor*) has usually been made a scapegoat of the author's limitations as a novelist in the early years of her literary production. These adjectives have only seldom been used neutrally but have been suffused with negative connotations by most critics, who have seen in Montero's first novel an unruly miscellanea of barely literary genres, including political propaganda, concealed interviews and journalistic articles. Among the commentators who use the broad classification of Montero's novel as a mixture of literature and journalism as a starting point for their respective analyses, several of them refer to this trait as faulty or limiting, as an insidious characteristic of Montero's novel that hindered its entering into the realm of pure and unadulterated literature (Zatlin 1987: 30; Gascón Vera 1987: 62, Forsås-Scott 1991: 9; Knights 1999: 52; Ahumada Peña 1999: 31; Harges 1999: 171; Harges 2000: 4; Hardcastle 2000: 417).

This posture seems to originate from an engrained negative disposition towards merely expository literature, especially due to its tacit link with social protest, and

ultimately, with politics (the much dreaded identification between literature and politics). Hence, qualifiers such as “didactic” (Harges 2000: 4) or “impresionista” (Gascón Vera 1987: 62) are used to demean Montero’s first novel and to place them at the level of social tracts or pamphlet-like writings with an overtly condemnatory thrust. In this section, I will try to elucidate what these adjectives mean when applied to Montero’s *Crónica del desamor* and why, far from bringing the novel down to a non-literary status, in fact they serve to maintain it at a point of genre hybridisation and stylistic subversion, necessary in a work that effectively managed to “bridge the gap between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture” (Drinkwater 1995: 159) at a time of social, political, and cultural turmoil in Spain.

Attempts to reach a sharp generic delineation of the many pivotal writings of the postmodernist era have proved a fruitless and frustrating enterprise, and one that was increasingly thwarted by the deliberate hybridism of those works considered seminal in this respect, (Roland Barthes’ *Le plaisir du text* (1973) written in a purely gnomic mode or Hélène Cixous’s breaking of all genre boundaries in her academic writings are but a few celebrated, though of course not novel, examples). With regard to Spanish fiction, several studies have been published that attempt to fix the literary genre of certain works, in an effort to fix their meaning and significance within the national literary arena. Abigail Lee Six’s attempt to pin down the genre of Tusquets’s collection of interrelated short stories *Siete miradas en un mismo paisaje* (Lee Six 1996), a critical enterprise first attempted by María Esther Lecumberri (1988), José Ignacio Moraza’s book length publication on the almost unclassifiable, twentieth-century author Miguel Espinosa and his “filosofismo moralizante” (Moraza 1999: 66), or Ricardo Krauel’s commentary on Ana María Moix’s taste for genre diffusion as epitomised by her poem “Una novela” (Krauel 1998), constitute some examples of how certain literary works continue to elude firm generic classification and, thus, exemplify a feature which the critics ultimately celebrate: the postmodernist maxims of formal fragmentation and purposeful displacement of pre-supposed literary fixity.

In the case of Montero’s *Crónica del desamor*, however, the book’s manifest collage-like façade and formal eclecticism has been frequently interpreted in negative terms, along with critics’ tendency to ascribe this feature to the novel’s journalistic

format and style. Beyond the mere drive towards genre categorisation (so recurrent in introductory commentary), however, no elaborate elucidation of what this label means has been articulated. Is it taken for granted that Montero, a renowned journalist by profession in Spain, let her craft permeate her first literary incursion through and through in a failed attempt to disengage from autobiography (another much berated trait of her first two novels)? And how, or at what level, did this propensity towards journalistic style affect her novels? Was *Crónica del desamor* a true attempt at veracity, a journalistic maxim *per se*?

When Montero's first novel is derogatorily described as journalistic in tone and format, critics might not have in mind journalistic style as such but, rather, its much berated variant, journalese, a kind of hackneyed, cliché-ridden style designed to catch the readers' attention rapidly and effectively, even if through a reasonable and agreed amount of exaggeration or dramatising. One of the intended effects of this writing mode is to make certain events sound newsworthy, even when their actual thematic bulk is not fresh or does not correspond to a true advance in the sequence of occurrences reported (one of the maxims of journalese is, in fact, to utilise verbs that always denote action, movement, or change). Journalese is usually also highly formulaic, inasmuch as it selects certain terms or expressions and attaches a particular import to them, which thence remains fixed and serves to convey some degree of authoritativeness, urgency or contrast in a more or less breezy manner. Due to this style's ultimate disregard for purely informational maxims, its existence remains anathema to journalism as such. As described in *Quill*, a magazine for the professional journalist:

Journalese, in short, is hack journalism. It's chiefly unoriginal; its talent is mimicry. And, like all jargon, it seems a code for insiders, a badge of belonging –so its greatest appeal is among those with the strongest herd instinct. (LaRocque 1995: 31)

No critical study on Montero has analysed her style from the point of view of the extent to which it complies with or reflects the descriptors above, or even attempted a justification of why her first novel has been customarily dismissed as journalistic. A possible exception to this is Thomas R. Franz's article 'Homosexuals and Bisexuals in Montero's Fiction: Diegesis and Judgement', where he suggests the link between Montero's writing praxis and North American New Journalism, whereby the

“investigative techniques and insights of the reporter” are put “at the service of the intuitions and convictions of the novelists” (Franz 1997: 209). However, this remark is barely probed further and is not accompanied by an elucidation of how this link is shaped in Montero’s textuality.

My contention is that there are at least two ways in which *Crónica del desamor* can be defined as journalistic. First, at the stylistic level, the novel is indeed constructed by means of an almost fitful sequence of brisk fragments or snapshots which exhibit a highly characteristic and distinguishably ‘Monterian’ formal configuration. Second, and at the level of thematic material, the novel attempts a veracious representation of a number of paradigmatic scenes, which define the historical and social moment it represents. But veracity in Montero’s novel is not accomplished through the detailed and strictly accurate exposition of informative data as in journalistic parlance; instead, she draws on highly specific but immediately identifiable cultural items and on the constant recourse to banality and ordinary life (especially of women) as a newsworthy matter, perfectly apt to undergo a transformation into literature. Let us examine these two points at greater length.

*Crónica del desamor* comprises the sequential description of a number of interrelated scenarios which develop through the unifying thematic thread of Ana’s unoriginal existence and that of her clique of mostly female friends (the focus also shifts to Cecilio her homosexual male friend and Zorro, another male acquaintance who, in the book, represents the contemporaneous *movida madrileña* and its most transgressive aspect; both male figures are social outcasts). The fact that the book has been classified as easily “readable” (Drinkwater 1995: 153) may originate from, among other factors which will be discussed subsequently, its being composed of relatively short thematic units, redolent of a journalistic style insofar as they resemble those newspaper articles or editorials designed with a short attention span in mind. Formally these sequences also exhibit a characteristic configuration: they are often composed of concatenated, cumulative noun phrases, or protracted sentences with significantly scarce verbal forms which give the reader an almost plastic definition of the situation, physical setting, or individual character being described: a kind of

patchwork is thus concocted through the juxtaposition of this type of descriptive passages. Let us pose a few examples:

Zapatos lustrosos, brillantes como cristal. Una chaqueta de lona, una chalina en rojos, unos pantalones grises de tela fina, anchos, con pliegues en la cintura. Y el pelo corto, crespo, pegado a las sienes con gomina. Un perfecto ejemplar, este Alejandro, del mercado de la noche, diecisiete o dieciocho años a la venta, ni más guapo ni más inteligente ni más joven que los otros, que esas decenas de muchachitos que pueblan el Madrid prohibido. (CD: 131-132)

Como la primavera ya está entrada y los soles de este mes de mayo aprietan con pretensiones de verano, el escuálido banco de la esquina, junto a la casa de Ana, se ha vuelto a ocupar por los ancianos de siempre, que siempre son distintos y parecen los mismos, las mismas arrugas, los mismos ojos opacos y medrosos. Centro de Madrid, contaminación, ruidos, coches, alquitrantes flotantes, polvo pegajoso y espeso. (CD: 76)

The descriptive drive informing this type of passages is not so redolent of journalism as it is of an almost cinematic mode of presentation. Situations, locations, and characters are often depicted through this mode of nominal accumulation which arrests or retards real action and resemble the kind of scenery descriptors typical of dramatic texts. There is, in fact, an almost meagre sense of action in *Crónica del desamor*. Ana and her friends move from one scenario to the other with an ingrained sense of stagnancy, immersing themselves in the feeling of cyclical repetition that informs their lives as women and that of their equally stuck predecessors. Ana's prediction of the denouement of her much awaited affair with Soto Amón and the gradual confirmation that, in reality, this final climax was to be as grim and disappointing as she had foreseen is a key way in which social inertia is conveyed in the novel. Stylistically, the novel's paucity of verbal forms (the two examples above are intended to evince this stylistic tendency), serves a similar purpose. Set in an atmosphere of profound social disenchantment, Rosa Montero's style in her first novel typifies the static nature of most received, social ways, including communicative or conversational maxims, work policies and gender roles. It is therefore not surprising that characters are often depicted motionlessly and as if they were typecast by their gender or appearance, as if they were real actors and actresses following unknowingly a prescribed and immutable script. As Ana herself lucidly

snaps towards the end of the novel, when reflecting on a generally tacit sexual protocol:

Piensa Ana que algo va mal, muy mal en todo. Que ella es en esto víctima, pero también cómplice. Que sigue fingiendo, temerosa de no dar la talla impuesta por una sexualidad machista que esclaviza hoy a hombres y mujeres. Temerosa de decepcionar en su imagen de amante prototípica, contribuyendo así a que el teatro se repita. Tan encadenados estamos a nuestro *rol*, en esta sociedad en la que vivimos a través de estereotipos. (CD: 243-244)

Apart from the novel's configuration in brisk, editorial-like incursions into social commentary, with a characteristic style based on the concatenation of noun phrases, the text may also be attributed a journalistic vein inasmuch as it attempts to report a veracious and highly localised line of events and settings. Veracity, as was previously mentioned, is here recreated through a panoply of easily recognisable cultural and historical references which render the novel a chronicle of what could be dubbed a national routine, largely, though not always, through a female perspective. There are passages where fictional material is interspersed with what reads as newspaper excerpts reporting *sucesos* (a kind of accident or crime reports), or Ana's own articles for the magazine she works for are partly reproduced as the novel unfolds. Allusions to, for instance, a number of crucial figures in contemporary Spanish history such as the anarchist Buenaventura Durruti (166), the president of the Spanish communist party, PCE, and key figure in the Transition into democracy, Santiago Carrillo (102), or Adolfo Suárez (43), the first prime minister of Spain after the end of the dictatorship, are mingled with numerous references to the highly localised elements (brands, customs, traditional gastronomy) that give shape to day-to-day living in Spain. The novel is thus rendered a highly localised work of fiction which aims to depict both the social unrest of the recent years before its publication and the emerging feeling of political *desencanto* that was to follow, through the constant reference to quotidian details of Spanishness and to the national reality.

Inasmuch as the novel can therefore be classified as primarily reportorial in function, and because it abounds with elements of a prototypically journalistic style (particularly, as we have seen, its constitution in sequential snapshots of a highly localisable reality and its drive towards veracity), it could be defined as a creative combination of fictional matter and simulated press cuttings. The reasons why this

transgressive literary technique has been subjected to widespread critique at a time when literary fiction was distinctively heterogeneous and often deliberately unclassifiable as far as genre or style were concerned remain a moot point. Moreover, the fact that its propensity to social commentary has been customarily condemned seems anomalous when the novel could be simply approached as a trailblazing work of fiction designed to serve a collaborative purpose at a time of socio-political urgency, especially for women. It seems that, because the novel in fact focuses on a female day-to-day experience in the Spain of the Transition, all that could be catalogued as transparent social critique (or just plain exact transcription) in many other works of art (take the thrust of Edward Hopper's paintings, for instance, whose profound attachment to American, everyday banal scenes was widely acclaimed and whose *Hotel room* appears in the front cover of the Debate edition of *Crónica del desamor*),<sup>22</sup> turns to a bothersome maundering, a mere "cotilleo mental" (Rivera 1989, in Reisz 1995: 193) in the case of Montero's novel. The connection between Montero's *Crónica...* and Hopper's own artistic agenda is a highly suggestive one. The import of the latter's paintings relies "upon a collective store of images and concepts" (Renner 1990: 89) which, when assembled together, produce the effect of evoking the irony of human solitude (Levin 2001: 212) in a world crammed with material props. The fact that the painter took pleasure in an unaffected approach to the stuff of everyday human activities as they unfold in the most ordinary settings, enhanced the weight of his works' psychological charge. To this purpose, some of his techniques, most conspicuously his use of lettering and brand names, seem pertinently in league with Montero's own stylistic strategies. Paintings such as "Drug Store" (1927), "The Circle Theater" (1936) or "Gas" (1940) are all distinctive for their integration of well-known brand names such as Ford or Mobilgas. More pungently, as Rolf Günter Renner has interpreted:

And occasionally Hopper indulges in a little irony when he highlights this lettering. For instance: in the painting of the venerable corner drug store, Silber's Pharmacy, the

---

<sup>22</sup> Though focusing on a different aspect of Hopper's work, namely, his distinctive way of representing human isolation and ennui in a milieu of marked capitalistic apogee such as the twenties in America, the work of Marguerite Dinonno Intemann also analyses the thematic link between the American painter and the Spanish writer Soledad Puértolas (Dinonno Intemann 1994).

crass advertisement for “Ex-Lax” (a laxative to ease one of Civilization’s endemic ailments) contrasts not only with the store name in terms of its lettering style but also with the old-fashioned dignity of the window display of jars, drapes and gift sets. (Renner 1990: 24-25)

Such a synthesis of both consumerist grandeur and decadence deriving from the artist’s close observation of the everyday chimes with Rosa Montero’s project in her first novel. However, while in the case of the American artist these modes of pictorial semiosis have been complimented through various types of encomiastic interpretation as veritable “metaphors of silence” (Renner 1990: 85) whereby the simple representation of urban routine is to be read as universalising depiction of the human experiences of human isolation, alienation, and incommunicability, in the case of Monterian criticism this comparable technique is customarily impugned.

It seems tenable to suggest that *Crónica del desamor*, because of its assertive iconoclasm and its recourse to a number of literary techniques and subject matter historically considered to be unsuitable for artistic creation (journalism and the ordinariness of a woman’s life, respectively), has been subjected to classifications and continuous distortional bracketing which gradually undergo negative overtones, a phenomenon always adjacent to literary production by women, by, as the Galician poet and literary critic Ana Romaní writes, “elas –nós, as outras- por sempre adxectivadas” (Romaní 2003: 145).

### **5.3 The Construction of Irony: Defamiliarisation and Critique in *Crónica del desamor***

As the previous sections are intended to show, Rosa Montero’s first novel has been subject to much critical misshaping, be it by the ‘stretching’ of its original intentions as far as the reproduction of a specifically female voice is concerned (section 5.1) or by the ‘narrowing’ of its literary value through restrictive bracketing of its format or literary techniques (section 5.2). A further feature of *Crónica del desamor* that has been unanimously acknowledged but rarely addressed in critical commentary is the ironic and humorous quality of its style. Many critics converge in their appreciation of the novel, and indeed of Montero’s later production, as a double-edged work that oscillates between the tragic (through the manifest pathos of the lives it depicts) and



the risible (through the concomitant ordinariness of its characters' existence), all in a recognisable humorous, sarcastic tone that gives the novel its subversive quality. While this feature has been customarily praised as one of Montero's most effective literary assets (Davies 1994: 96; Knights 1999: 53; Harges 1999: 173; Harges 2000: 11), the way it is textually produced and its veritably subversive effects remain unaddressed.

In the present section, I will try to identify the textual loci of irony in *Crónica del desamor*, in an attempt to dissect the transgressive nature of a literary discourse that dismantles (at times covertly and very subtly, at times in flagrantly sardonic, stylistic turns) the workings and supporting pillars of patriarchal society at its substructure. Because it is mainly through language that cultural and social conceptions are fixed and reinforced, it is through language that Montero attempts to perturb the long-settled sediments of the patriarchal mindset and structures in Spain. Irony, an eminently discursive phenomenon, is, I will suggest, Montero's most recurrent and effective tool to speak for a female voice, to rescue and expose the long occluded lives and voices of contemporary Spanish women (or of a more or less representative group of modern, urban, working women in the Spain of the Transition). This posing of an all-embracing question mark is, I will suggest, Montero's own rendition of an ultimately flexible and accommodating concept of feminine writing.

*Crónica del desamor* employs irony at two levels. On the one hand, irony unfolds thematically according to a series of fictional scenarios that evoke the paradoxical nature of its characters' past and current situations. This type of irony, commonly referred to as "accidental" (Tittler 1984), "observable" (Muecke 1970: 56), or "situational" (Kaufer 1983: 452; Holdkroft 1983: 493; S'Hiri 1992), reflects the conflict between expectations and reality, that is, between what one would naturally and readily envisage or await and the final outcome of these anticipations, always perplexingly dissimilar. There are many instances of this type of ironic clash in the novel, situations where the characters are confronted with the contradictions or irrationality of their own existence and which Montero apprehends with a characteristic, humorous eye. One of them is the fact that, for example, José María (Ana's lover for years) who continuously kept her at bay while living with another

woman and who never really showed a strong and sustained interest for her, began to accost her only when she became emotionally independent and irreversibly disengaged from their relationship. As Ana indirectly recalls on receiving a letter from him while she is on holiday with her mother and her child: “qué ironía. Tantos años conociéndose y es ésta la primera vez que le ha escrito, como si ahora fuese incapaz de aguantar una separación de veinte días” (CD: 148). Or the clash between well-to-do, prosperous suburbs and marginal urban periphery, exemplified in the case of a new housing development’s complaints about the nearby geriatric hospital leaving their dead patients lying on the garden for collection. The name of the estate is *Vistabella* (CD: 250). More significantly, one of the novel’s sustaining thematic threads, that is, Ana’s infatuation with her apparently unattainable boss Soto Amón, is, in fact, a protracted working of situational irony when their final, utterly predictable, and stereotyped sexual encounter serves as the novel’s denouement.

But there is a more far-reaching sense in which “the irony of events” (Harvey Brown 1983: 546) underlies a novel such as *Crónica del desamor*. As a work representative of an unmistakable social and historical enclave (the same one in which it was published), *Crónica...* assumes in its fictional grid the paradoxes, incongruities and overall confusion of a country in a state of all-pervasive flux. As many critics and socio-cultural commentators have noted, the astounding swiftness with which change was articulated and formally installed could not but give rise to a sense of social and political vertigo, an account of which can be found in John Hooper’s slightly waggish but largely pertinent chronicle of the Transition years *The New Spaniards* (1995).<sup>23</sup> The speedy re-structuration of crucial matters relating to social and political freedom, education, and sexual politics was inevitably accompanied by instances of maladjustment, disconformity, or just plain legal voids and contradictions, thus giving rise to initial disorientation and then to a gradual veering towards distrust of collective or organised forms of action, toward a general *individualismo* (Hooper 1995: 444). One of the most glaring and long-lasting fissures

---

<sup>23</sup> For a recent contestation of the received notion that the Spanish Transition into democracy was an exceptional example of non-traumatic socio-political progression see Steven Marsh’s “Insinuating Spaces: Memories of a Madrid Neighbourhood During the Spanish Transition” (2003).

of this transformative process was the one affecting women and their newly acquired social freedom and mobility. A generational breach emerged between women educated and socialised in the monolithic structures of Francoist sexual discrimination and younger women who had lived through the most permissive last years of the dictatorship, and who were presumably more prepared to encompass and integrate the drastic changes to come into their lives. The most immediate outcome, however, was that women of all ages and predispositions were caught in a kind of social trap. While the new legal structures endeavoured progressively to sanction gender equality, society would foreseeably lag behind. Women were thus caught in a tangle of double standards and duplicitous demagoguery which showed what for a long time would be a rather forked mode of progress for them. Montero's *Crónica...* exemplifies, in an emphatically pungent way, the various manifestations of this trap, which Spanish urban women of the Transition had to dodge on a daily basis. Pamela Erens has aptly summarised what seems to be a quintessentially ironic state of things regarding women's situation during that period:

Since Franco's death, the traditional sexual restrictions have been broken down, but just as in America a decade earlier, the main result for women has been that men have been free to have sex with them and then abandon them. Women are left with the illegal abortions, single parenting and financial struggles that result. With as yet no avenues toward political change, they keep half-heartedly at the game of love, telling themselves that something will surely come of it someday. (Erens 1993: 196)

This contradictory type of freedom, Javier Escudero has argued, is the stuff of everyday existence for the female characters in *Te trataré como a una reina* (Escudero 1998: 150), and especially for Antonia, the middle-aged spinster, characterised in the novel as a real victim of this schism, with almost cruel accuracy. However, the character of Antonia in Montero's third novel has its germination in a slightly younger Antonia appearing briefly in *Crónica del desamor*. Recalled by Ana as one of the fixtures in her past job in a bank, Antonia is depicted as the victim of society's clashing attitudes towards gender roles and expectations. While still in the search for a proper and formal *noviazgo*, and therefore almost certainly a virgin, and since the chances of marrying become fainter as she approaches her thirties, the character of Antonia begins to register the tensions and anxieties of realising her own redundancy by rebelling against it in the form of seemingly isolated, immaterial

gestures: a provocative and flamboyant nail polish or a furtive visit to the lingerie section of *El corte inglés*. The irony of her situation comes into plain view when one realises that her battle is in fact lost from the outset. As a woman caught in the maelstrom of rapid social change, but still functioning according to the long-engrained creed of sexual repression, her motions towards liberation seem clumsy and laughable. As the whole system of signification becomes more and more alien (and alienating) to her and to the values that she holds unquestioningly, the slightly pathetic but still cheery and jovial Antonia in *Crónica...* will inevitably turn into the irrevocably misplaced and abandoned Antonia in *Te trataré...* Situational irony is, I will argue, the generative engine of *Crónica del desamor* insofar as it recreates the wide-ranging variations of common disadvantages, paradoxes, and mere impasses that women still had to confront at a time when their situation was supposed to be qualitatively better.

On a different plane, irony is applied instrumentally as a discursive strategy. In what follows, I will try to identify those instances of verbal (textual) irony in an attempt to elucidate the duplicitous nature of discourse in *Crónica del desamor*. In short, verbal irony is that figure of speech whereby the meaning intended by the speaker departs from the literal meaning ascribed to the words used, a conscious and purposeful discursive phenomenon, widely used, though at times almost imperceptibly, and which, as Booth stated, “undermines clarities, opens up vistas of chaos, and either liberates by destroying all dogma or destroys by revealing the inescapable canker of negation at the heart of every affirmation” (Booth 1974: ix).

An analysis of irony in *Crónica del desamor* will prove a valuable mode of textual examination, and, concretely, of the ways Rosa Montero exercises subversion through the ironic interplay between signifier and signified, the deliberate clash between what her words would mean in an unmarked locutionary context, and what they truly signify once they have been singled out and examined against their received denotation, which they ultimately sabotage.

Verbal irony, by definition deliberate, serves an evaluative purpose that renders it one of the most effective instruments of critique. Despite its high chance of going adrift or of, as S’Hiri calls it, “misfiring” (1992: 10), irony is a widespread linguistic

practice with effective and persuasive repercussions for its users. Roughly put, the exercise of irony requires three defining elements: first, an initial state(ment), that is a contextual scope to be ironised, which might range from a specific verbal utterance to the larger environment in which it was produced (be it merely conversational, social, cultural); second, an evaluative attitude towards this original state(ment), and, finally, an act of verbal appropriation of this state(ment) which reflects, by means of removing its literal meaning and attaching a prosthetic one (the one envisaged by the ironist), a censorious posture. Thus, the use of irony generally springs from a condemnatory attitude towards the initial element, a feature which most critics have considered defining of ironic interplay (Cutler 1979; Kaufer 1981) and of its “weighted” impact (Hutcheon 1994: 37).

In its transaction of meanings, irony instantiates distortion and discloses the many points of potential breakdown in the apparently stable systems of thought informing communication. It is precisely this feature that has prompted innumerable writers throughout history to use it as an invaluable tool (or weapon) with the intention of either fortifying or weakening the existing social structures and conventions. This defining feature of irony is what Linda Hutcheon termed its “transideological nature” (Hutcheon 1994: 52), that is, its two-pronged figurative front, whereby institutional mainstays may be both inveighed against or supported depending on the ironist and addressee’s positioning and predispositions. The historical notion of irony as an instrument for reactionary operations comes readily to mind, but also, its most recent appropriation by those unprivileged or peripheral groups undertaking oppositional action. To put it in Hutcheon’s words:

The same utterance may have the opposite pragmatic effects: what is approved of as polemical and transgressive to some might simply be insulting to others; what is subversive to some, might be offensive to others. [...] For those positioned *within* a dominant ideology, such a contesting might be seen as abusive or threatening; for those marginalized and working to undo that dominance, it might be subversive or transgressive [...]. (Hutcheon 1994: 52, emphasis in the original)

It is easy to see why anti-establishment groups working within the parameters of race, class or gender have seized upon the polyvalencies of irony for their own transgressive purposes, an enterprise which is exemplified by feminist modes of action. The convenience of irony in feminist discourse has been frequently pointed

out both in discursive contrivance (Hutcheon 1994: 27; Crawford 1995: 160; Giora 1995: 260) and in spontaneous conversation, as a means of distancing, self-deprecating humour largely used by women (Speer 2002). As regards contemporary peninsular literature, several studies suggest the distinctive presence of irony in the post-Franco novelistic production (Sobejano-Morán 1994: 42) and, more specifically, in women-authored works (Gilkinson 1999). It is precisely in this frame of literary activity that I would like to place Rosa Montero's first novel. As I will try to show in this section, discourse in *Crónica del desamor* seizes (patriarchal) language and undermines it through the contrived workings of irony, with a view to unveil the apparently stable but ultimately biased and discriminatory pillars that sustain it. This stylistic scrutiny will focus on two main modes of verbal irony that operate in the novel. First, I will look at the deliberate slippage of style purposefully created when life at its most quotidian level is recounted in the novel. In short, Montero creates an ironic, and often-humorous effect when applying a distinctly literary and elevated register to the frequently mundane and everyday subject matter she tackles in her book. As a result, the unexceptional lives of a representative clique of female friends in Madrid are underscored and subversively turned into a quasi-epic interpretation of a type of banality that had remained unreported up to this moment. Second, I will examine the sort of irony that emerges from the implied conflict of belief between the ideas that are stated in the novel and the ideas that can be justifiably ascribed to the author. As I will suggest, this is the type of irony that most effectually fractures patriarchal ideology and language. Both these factors (deliberate stylistic clash and ideological conflict) have been put forward by Wayne Booth as decisive clues towards the identification of irony in his study *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974). Let us see how his influential typification of irony can be applicable to Montero's novel.

### 5.3.1 Stylistic Clashes

A typically ironic shift may occur, as Booth explained, "if a speaker's style departs notably from whatever the reader considers the normal way of saying a thing, or the way normal for this speaker" (Booth 1974: 67). The effect of this type of ironic contortion is a mocking one. Instances of this type of stylistic imbalance abound in *Crónica del desamor*, as the author manipulates language in order to create

significant gaps between content and form. With a frequency that renders this stylistic turn a recognisably 'Monterian' writing technique, the author depicts markedly quotidian and banal scenes with a stylistic solemnity that instantly betrays a derisive function. Thus, humour is created through the literary interplay between subject matter and style, and the ordinariness of the world narrated is deliberately highlighted. See, for instance, the following example, where a night-out scene is described:

alguien está pidiendo un vodka con limón justo al lado y Ana aprovecha esta feliz circunstancia para despedirse y alcanzar la mesa del rincón que la Pulga ocupa, **tras conquistarla en dura pugna** contra una muchacha lánguida de ojos agrisados y un tipo muy bajito con una oreja cosida de largos pendientes, como para compensar.

Nada más sentarse, la Pulga le enseña un porro meticulosamente liado al amparo del canto de la mesa. (CD: 116)

The expressions in bold signal a meaningful breach between the narrative subject and the stylistic mode implemented. In the first instance, a sort of archaic parlance is used (the verb *conquistar* with its almost medieval resonance and the highly formal *pugna*) to describe the often arduous task of finding a place to sit down at a local pub. In the second paragraph, the author indulges in an almost emotive way of describing the process of rolling a joint, with particular emphasis on the clandestinity implied in that action at the time. A similar stylistic shift occurs in the following excerpt, which also describes a circumstance typical of a night out context:

El local está lleno a rebosar y **los asistentes ejecutan laboriosos y meritorios ejercicios gimnásticos** para atravesar la sala, **vaso en mano**, sin derramar el contenido ni quemar a nadie con su cigarrillo en el apretado vaivén. (CD: 264)

The fact that the people that crowd the pub are referred to as *los asistentes* (formal Spanish for *those present*) and that their efforts to move about without causing any mishap are described as *laborious and meritorious gymnastic exercises* stands in sharp contrast with the otherwise plain and recognisably habitual nature of the scene. Irony and humour emerge when this common situation is depicted in a formulaic manner, and the elements in this sketch of reality are suddenly turned into pantomimic referents. A further ironic shift can be identified in the purposeful mixing of formal and colloquial terms (note, for instance, the use of words such as

*local* or the expression *lleno a rebosar*, together with the more formal expressions highlighted above), a technique that emphasises the interplay between stylistic levels and the irony that is generated as a consequence.

A similar result is achieved by the collocational clash generated through the combination of certain words or the creation of new ones, techniques which serve to evidence the resilience of the discourse used and the usually disconcerting sensation effected when semantic breaches are opened. The irony thus created springs from the concoction of unexpected denotations, departing from an original, literal meaning which is finally subverted through collocational maladjustment. Let us examine the following examples:

Una sonrisa distendió el **bigote rectilíneo y oficial** del hombre, era una sonrisa satisfecha que rubricaba el buen orden de las cosas. (CD: 153)

Pero estábamos en que Ana era **filiforme** y no tenía la regla. (CD: 157)

A los tres meses de haberle **incrustado el cobre** se quedó embarazada y fue a Londres. Abortó higiénicamente, esterilizadamente, **internacionalmente**. Abortó con amargura, como todas, como siempre. (CD: 21)

All the examples above spring from a discontentment with a series of socially induced pre-conceptions, which the author endeavours to unsettle through ironic, stylistic recreation. The words highlighted above encapsulate the evaluative function necessary for irony to operate effectively and convey, through their own contextual inadequacy, the author's intention to expose a series of discriminatory prejudices. In the first example, for instance, the extraordinary semantic combination *bigote oficial* serves to identify and subvert not only patriarchal symbols in general, but also the type of man who succumbed to those aesthetic norms redolent of fascism implanted by Franco and followed by "his officials" (Hooper 1995: 3). The mere enhancing of the concept of a moustache to an emblematic status, a token of power and order, effectively ridicules the society in which this symbolic system operates. In the second example, the technical adjective *filiforme* (generally used in the fields of physics or botanics and mostly to refer to inert objects) is here used to refer to the protagonist's physique as a girl, visibly echoing a male perception of a female body while it has not fully developed and is therefore a non-sexual object. The last excerpt recreates



patriarchal detachment from what have been historically considered women's issues. The thorny topics of abortion (abortion was not depenalised in Spain until 1985 with the controversial *ley del aborto*) and contraception, both representative indicators of an autonomous female sexuality, are addressed here in distant, formal mood: the expression *incrustar el cobre* is used euphemistically (and not exempt of a certain feeling of disgust at the notion) to refer to the fitting of the diaphragm. By using such an unfriendly expression, Montero deliberately evokes the firmly entrenched social disengagement from specifically female concerns, a state of things also reflected in the following concatenation of adverbs "higiénicamente, esterilizadamente, internacionalmente", which refers to the way abortions ought to be conducted by those who could afford it (the common reality of atrocious abortions carried out in clandestinity was an entirely different matter, also addressed by Montero in her novel). The adverb "internacionalmente", constituted *ad hoc* for the purposes of irony but almost senseless in itself, points to a flagrant contradiction in Spain at the time and thus links literary discourse to historical matter: while the availability of contraceptive methods was gradually implanted with the restoration of democracy, the lack of political commitment towards parallel sexual education in the early years of the UCD government precluded their natural normalisation in society. Thus, contraception remained for a long time a matter of ignorance, both for most men, who looked down on it derisively as none of their business, (a distancing attitude evoked by Montero's apocryphal voice in this extract), and for most women, who did not know how to use it reliably and safely. The fact that the recourse to illegal abortion (especially overseas) did not diminish in numbers during this time is explained by Hooper as one of "the most remarkable paradoxes" (1995: 157).

What these examples aim to suggest is that irony in *Crónica del desamor*, created either through the intended clash between ordinary subject matter and the stylistically elaborate way of narrating it, or through the meaningful combination of semantically incompatible or fabricated words, plays a part in exposing the concealed fissures and fractures of Spain's social progress in the Transition and how women were, more often than not, the ultimate victims, or at least a class of secondary beneficiaries of the major political and legal breakthroughs of the time. Moreover, through irony, the

recognition of a number of pre-established patriarchal patterns of behaviour and action that need to be dismantled, eventually turns into comic representation and ultimate ridicule, thus bringing about a distancing effect on the part of the reader, who identifies and finally repudiates those same patterns. In this section I have tried to demonstrate that, as Booth says, “It is the conflict in stylistic levels, not any incompatibility of bits of knowledge or belief, that gives the show away” (Booth 1974: 69). The second type of irony adumbrated by his comment will be dealt with in the following section.

### 5.3.2 Irony through Conflicts of Belief

The subversive quality of Montero’s discourse in *Crónica del desamor* acquires full potency when irony is created through the narrator’s appropriation of patriarchal ideology for ultimate ridicule. On the whole, what this technique implies is the narrator’s seemingly innocuous reproduction of a set of beliefs that are received and conventional in the ironised context, but which, as the readers are expected to know, do not coincide with his/her own agenda. The fact that the narrator appears to accept them unproblematically is precisely what triggers off the ironic effect of this technique. As Booth explained: “we are alerted whenever we notice an unmistakable conflict between the beliefs expressed and the beliefs we hold *and suspect the author of holding*” (Booth 1974: 73, emphasis in the original).

I will argue that it is through this technique, which other critics have noted (Kaufer 1983: 453), that the paradoxes of the Spanish Transition regarding women’s status are effectively disclosed in Montero’s novel, especially through a calling into question of a series of prescribed gender roles that men and women alike seem to have unquestioningly adopted. As Vanessa Knights stated, it is precisely in this aspect of Montero’s first novel, that is, in its undermining of a society based on a patriarchal distribution of traditional gender roles and of human relationships understood as an endless exercise of performance, that its feminist thrust most evidently lies (Knights 1999: 56). I will further propose an analysis of irony as the liberating force which, while operating through sarcastic discursive mimesis, serves to locate and deride the very bases of gender oppression. The following are but a few examples encountered:

Y sabe que saldrá y será encantadora, inteligente, divertida y amable, que representará con sabio hábito su papel de mujer fuerte y libre, ni exigencias ni lágrimas **que son deleznales y femeninos defectos**. (CD: 10)

Por todo esto, Elena está inquieta, como desazonada. Por esto y también por su propio comportamiento. Se sabe agresiva y en las ocasiones de tensión siempre teme desbordarse, perder el control de su furia, convertirse en un personaje poco grato, en **una mujer al borde de la histeria que escupe las palabras entre espumarajos**, ahogada en su misma rabia. (CD: 48)

These passages are intended to expose a firmly engrained feminine role: that of the placid, quiet and unprotesting woman who does not upset her male partner, or indeed a whole society of predominant male partners, with her own questions and tribulations, which are ultimately deemed inconsequential. This role, which has a name ever since Virginia Woolf identified and confronted the apparently inoffensive, and yet deadly 'angel of the house', has been historically assigned to women, who were supposed to unquestioningly turn themselves into a sort of redoubt of peace and rest for their occupied husbands. In Spain, the promotion of this *status quo* was in full force under the Franco regime, during which women were only expected, and indeed educated to perform a merely appendicular role as an unremitting support to their husbands. This is precisely the type of enforced composure that Montero appears to be advocating in the passages above. In the first one, she refers to Ana's planning of her prospective date as a mere role playing, where she will exhibit a series of signs of self-confidence and independence, usually considered typically male, but which, by the same token, discards those behavioural patterns which are generally considered feminine and, because of this, also deplorable (*deleznales*). In the second passage, Elena, a central female character in the novel, indirectly reflects on her activism and commitment to social issues. Her involvement in demonstrations and public protests makes her an aggressive woman, a trait which she admits, but an attitude which is also dangerously close to the much demonised stereotype of the hysteric woman. Montero addresses these two commonplaces of gender stereotyping, that is woman as complaisant angel and woman as hysterical, without any apparent indictment of their evident sexist nature. However, it is the conflict between this type of prejudiced classifications and what the reader holds to be the author's rejection thereof that gives away the tacit ironic shift. Through this technique, adjectives such

as “deleznable” or the expressions “personaje poco grato... que escupe palabras entre espumarajos” are emptied of their literal signification and exposed in their own exaggeration, in the caricatural mimic they embody.

As we have noted previously, irony in these passages is highly meaningful, for it is linked to the severely ironic historical situation in which women found themselves trying to operate. While, on the legal and political planes, sexist strains and limitations were being tackled and gradually dismantled, in real life the performative weight of trying to keep pace with the subsequent social changes seemed to become greater and, in many senses, overwhelming. The apparent diffusion of restrictive gender roles and the concomitant independence and self-determination that these social shifts promised for women in fact gave way to a more bafflingly demanding situation. In short, a wider spectrum of social roles seemed to be available for them now (those of working person, political activist, or student, to name but a few of the ones represented in the novel) but the old restricting roles (those of supporting mother, uncomplaining wife, or simply gormless and uninformed person) were not to be disposed of that swiftly. As a result, women were now encumbered with a more exacting, and in many ways more precarious set of expectations that was, above all, significantly difficult to overthrow.

In the following extracts, the type of irony that concerns us here is used to address the social contradictions and shortcomings inherent to political progress at the time, which impinged directly on women’s everyday existence. Through talking about issues such as contraception or the social status of single mothers from an apocryphal male stance, Montero discloses the various prejudices that inform the discriminatory attitudes still patent at the time. See the following examples:

Y así, también en España, en **el prolífico franquismo**, los médicos modernos recetaron píldoras con indiscriminado afán: es igual la marca, no importa el descanso o la frecuencia, porque **la píldora es el invento liberador**. (CD: 28)

Tal parecería que en **esta sociedad ambigualmente liberal** se admite la existencia de la soltera que es madre de un hijo. Pero si **la soltera reincide**, si la mujer **insiste en su desorden, obcecada**, si **se atreve** a tener más hijos de diferentes padres **y pretende aun así permanecer independiente**, entonces, ah, entonces se convierte en caso inadmisible. (CD: 218-219)

The transcripts above are to be taken as unmistakable exercises of irony. The narrator seizes popular phrasings and reproduces its surreptitious, paternalistic overtones so that they are betrayed in discourse by the condescending dogmatism that they encircle. Without attaching any critical assessment, the evaluative function distinctive of irony is, nevertheless, fully carried out by the sheer exposure of a type of discourse (ultimately sexist language) that the author would not second. Upon reading passages like the above, the reader is encouraged to wonder about the source of power signing off on those issues, or, in more novelistic terms, the narrator from which they spring (i.e. an implied patriarchal voice) and not the author herself, who is merely acting as an echoic medium for the purposes of condemnatory ironisation. Expressions such as “*invento liberador*” when referring to the pill (liberating for whom?), or the contentious, almost legalistic terms used when mentioning women’s autonomous decision to have and raise their children out of wedlock, are all indicative of Montero’s pioneering undertaking: to ridicule patriarchal discourse through the ironic exposure of its tenets. Moreover, a type of parlance redolent of Francoist demagoguery is also satirised when the narrator refers to the last stage of the dictatorship as *el prolífico franquismo*. Not only is the adjective *prolífico* ironic in the most essential sense, insofar as its denotation runs counter to the actual nature of this period as barren and stagnant in almost absolute terms. More subtly, the phrase above points to the questionable advantages for women of a society that was suddenly “liberal”, in what can be viewed on the surface as a most abrupt social turn which was to yield inevitably pervasive double-standards and rifts in the implementation of its new revisionist enthusiasm. The vertiginous speed and suspicious willingness with which doctors illegally began to prescribe the pill in Spain since it first appeared in 1964 and the counteracting lack of information about it available to women, reveals the skewed nature of progress (indeed, only immediately *prolífico* to men) as was exercised at the time.

As we have seen, gender stereotypes, patriarchal leanings and the complexity of social progress in the Spain of the Transition are all called into question through irony in Montero’s first novel. Whilst values and critical commentary are very seldom overtly integrated, they nevertheless unfold in a supplementary, parallel text

from which they need to be constantly extracted. Irony serves as the intervening tissue between these two texts, one literal, the other interpretative and critical, with the ultimate effect of ridiculing and subverting the first. This exercise of recontextualisation (S'Hiri 1992: 120) of an initial proposition with a view to exposing its counterpoints is precisely what Montero does with patriarchal language and strictures. In this case, however, it is a whole dominant mindset and social mores at a highly specific historical moment that are being singled out for critical evaluation. Through irony, they will be made to sound, not simply false or irrelevant, but biased, discriminatory, and thoroughly unjust. Social and cultural transformation is only one step away from readers' sense of identification with this exercise of subversion.

The political function of irony needs to be emphasised at this point. I am not invoking here those articulations of irony as a prism of awareness, as a way of being in the world, formulated by Richard Harvey Brown (1983) or, more notoriously, by Richard Rorty (1989). Rather, I am referring to the widespread view that, because it foregrounds the duplicitous nature in every act of social regulation by trying to subvert the inequality of its discourse, irony is an invaluable tool for "intellectual manipulation and persuasion" (S'Hiri 1992: 69) throughout history, and when applied to oppositional struggle, "*the mode of expression par excellence* every time social and/or political oppression are in operation" (S'Hiri 1992: 69).

*Crónica del desamor* can therefore be classified in this regard as an examination of a number of social conventions and institutions in full force in the Spain of the Transition, which Montero aims to transgress through her distancing, ironic eye. In this section I have tried to show how irony is implemented textually by means of, primarily, two types of stylistic exercise: first, the interplay between stylistic levels which underscores, through the stylistically pompous report of banal events, the ironically central relevance of a group of women's characteristically eventless routines; second, the borrowing of an original discourse, in this case patriarchal discourse and the seemingly liberal social parlance in Spain during the Transition, with a view to expose their inequitable maxims and their highly detrimental consequences for women. Irony is here generated through the author's tacit but

unquestioned rejection of these maxims and of an underlying system of thought that had circumscribed preceding generations of women, her contemporaries, and herself to a life governed by patriarchal prescription.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In this section I have tried to address Montero's first work of fiction and the vast critical commentary it called forth. While my intention has not been to overthrow the extensive apparatus of critical interpretation that Montero's literary career has yielded so far, I have nevertheless tried to single out what I consider to be one of its most recurrent weaknesses, namely, that the several starting points generally taken for granted in most studies on the author's first novel (the possibility of Montero's deliberate creation of a distinctively feminine writing mode, its journalistic façade, and its use of irony as a means of subversion) have not been adequately justified. With a view to rectifying this shortcoming, I have tried to work towards stylistic elucidation primarily, in the belief that it was precisely this type of analysis that would reveal the novel's subversive value, but also due to the significant absence of thoughtful stylistic scrutiny in most studies tackled. More importantly, I would further contend that the fact that these qualifications of Montero's novel have gone largely uncontested, or taken *prima facie*, makes them lie dangerously near to the also undisputed, and widely prejudiced qualifications coming from another set of critics and reviewers (represented mainly in this study by the early male reviewers of Montero's novels and a few academic commentators) who have used adjectives such as 'autobiographical', 'confessional' or plain 'popular' as negatively charged descriptors, descriptors which have in fact been resorted to *ad nauseam* in order to criticise commercially successful, women-authored literature. A widely known international case which has attracted substantial scholarly attention in this regard is Erica Jong's steep fall from grace among critics and reviewers, from valuable and constructive feminist author to "mass culture writer" whose work is anything but literary (Templin 1997: 97). In the peninsular scene, a comparable occurrence has recently unfurled involving critics' ambivalence or plain dismissive slander directed towards the writer Lucía Etxebarria, a case that has also begun to be addressed in

academic dialogue (Bermúdez 2002: Redondo Goicoechea 2003: 120-121). What these studies aim to show is that the dominant metaphors flavouring most critiques provide all sorts of insights on the prevailing theories of literary value and on who controls and dictates them, namely an implicit, yet omnipresent “individuated male subject” functioning sanctimoniously as the “cultural norm” (Radway 1992: 525). These critics’ rhetorical resources rely solidly on qualifiers that the reader is to take unquestioningly as improper of a work of literature. The polyvalencies underwriting them are, however, slightly more complex, and ultimately redolent of a duplicitous discourse, where matters of gender discrimination are embedded. The persistent identification of autobiography and confessional modes of writing with women, as an indicator of undeveloped and narcissistic creativity, is coupled with the more compound perception of mass cultural production and consumption as laden with tropes of femininity, namely passivity, lack of discretion, or ‘consumption’ itself. Historical prejudice against this type of literary production should be understood in terms of these well-entrenched, latent connections, which have been investigated by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) or Andreas Huyssen (1986), and more recently by Janice Radway (1992). Their work proves that, when used unqualifiedly, and more importantly, when left uninvestigated, some recurrent critical labels are gradually loaded with prejudice and ultimately serve to vulgarise, and to vulnerabilise, the literary work.

I have tried, therefore, to address a series of insufficiently researched labels usually ascribed to Montero’s first novel with a view to forestalling, or perhaps simply exposing, this potential process of evaluative deterioration. My point has not been to bemoan some critics’ failure to appreciate a kind of objectifiable, universal quality in her novels, but to explore the attributes or allegations more frequently accredited to it, with the objective of dynamising a critical discourse which has at times felt rather trite. With this in mind, I have tried to demonstrate that Montero’s *Crónica del desamor*, with its characteristic ironic property (dismissed by some as “girls’ club type humour”; Hardcastle 2000: 434) and its elusive narrative format (often resentfully labeled as “journalistic”) constitutes, in fact, a valuable exemplification of the kind of creative commotion advocated by feminist, and in an



ampler sense, postmodernist maxims, but simultaneously unassignable to the author's embracing of French feminist tenets. Indeed, the marked experimental slant of Montero's first novel, with its collaged and multilayered discourse serves as weighty and eloquent a function as the subversive subject matter it reports on.

## Chapter 6: Rosa Montero in Translation: Towards an Elucidation of Reader Identification

In her most recent publication *La loca de la casa*, an amalgam of fiction, autobiography, and essayistic approximation to the workings of imagination and narrative creation, Rosa Montero describes her first novel *Crónica del desamor* as “un horrible volumen de entrevistas plagado de erratas” (Montero 2003: 9). This total and outright disowning of her first literary incursion is indirectly explained in the course of this book, as the author elaborates upon what she believes to be a number of fundamental premises of commendable literary creation. At several points in her heterogeneous text (also a sort of fictionalised autobiography akin to Tusquets’s *Correspondencia privada*), Montero reflects on what she perceives to be elements of intrusion into literary creation, that is, those signs which indicate an undeveloped or immature literary attempt. Unsurprisingly, the signs of literary unsophistication she mentions coincide with the same criticisms her first novel has been vulnerable to for years, which were explored in the previous chapter, namely, its overt commitment to a series of social causes, feminism included, and the novel’s irrefutable links with Montero’s autobiography. That her first novel may read as a more or less compact blend of scenes of easily recognisable, daily life, which serves to accommodate a considerable amount of social analysis, has led various critics to dispute the text’s literary status (Myers 1988). Montero herself adopts an identical posture and questions the literary validity of those works of fiction that spring from an instrumentalist application of art:

Para mí el famoso compromiso del escritor no consiste en poner sus obras a favor de una causa (el utilitarismo panfletario es la máxima traición del oficio; la literatura es un camino de conocimiento que uno debe emprender cargado de preguntas, no de respuestas), sino en mantenerse siempre alerta contra el tópico general, contra el prejuicio propio, contra todas esas ideas heredadas y no contrastadas que se nos meten insidiosamente en la cabeza. (Montero 2003: 57)

Likewise, she censures the marked autobiographical influence present in many literary works and dismisses it as a sign of creative inexperience and

unambitiousness. For Montero, the kind of autobiographical attachment to the author's own experiential universe, which so many works of fiction do not seem to supersede (and her first two novels are, she has admitted, vulnerable to this liability), is but a first phase in the process of creative maturation which needs to be gradually discarded:

Creo que la madurez de un novelista pasa ineludiblemente por un aprendizaje fundamental: el de la distancia de lo narrado. El novelista no sólo tiene que saber, sino también sentir que el narrador no puede confundirse con el autor. Alcanzar la distancia exacta con lo que cuentas es la mayor sabiduría de un escritor; tienes que conseguir que lo que narras te represente, en tanto que ser humano, de un modo simbólico y profundo, del mismo modo en que los sueños lo hacen; pero todo eso no debe tener nada que ver con lo anecdótico de tu pequeña vida. (Montero 2003: 266-267)

Montero's first two novels *Crónica del desamor* (1979) and *La función Delta* (1981) have been customarily approached as a coherent block in the author's early production (Davies 1994: 108), particularly in terms of the latter's conscious elaboration and expansion of the themes and forms only sketchily suggested in the first one. While *Crónica del desamor* has been described by the author herself as a mere outpouring of ideas which she ineluctably had to unleash before turning to more thoughtful and better planned literary attempts, *La función Delta* is usually regarded as the first product of a conscious creative effort (Montero in Glenn 1990: 279). What in the first novel was nebulous and typifying characterisation, chaotic thematic representation and multilayered style (the resonance of colloquial, almost *cheli* jargon of Madrid at the time is mixed with pungent social commentary), turns in the second one into fully-fledged characters and well-wrought narration with a meaningful structure based on temporal intercalation. These conscious differences notwithstanding, which Montero and most critics have seen in terms of progression from one novel to the next one (Erens 1993: 200), have nevertheless not impeded their generalised appreciation as a continuum. Their predominantly female narratorial stance, the similar professional fields of the two protagonists (Ana is a journalist, Lucía works for a publicity agency and is about to premiere her first film), the novels' shared metafictional slant, which in the case of *Crónica del desamor* has been criticised by some critics as forcefully appended to the last chapter in an impetuous attempt to grant the novel some structural complexity (Erens 1993: 200;

Franz 1997: 210), and the conspicuous intertextual referents that connect them (the script of Lucía's filmic debut uses the relationship between Ana and Soto Amón, which remains unresolved in *Crónica...*, as a starting point), make these novels stand as two interlinked literary renditions of a series of common concerns. It is this amply acknowledged link that has made critics dismiss both novels altogether as amateurish undertakings, too revealing of the author's own experiences and reflections to be regarded as autonomous and self-generating.

Despite this critical and authorial animadversion towards Montero's first two novels, they are the ones that have attracted most attention in both Spanish and international academia. There is a palpable scarceness of studies dealing with her most recent novels: the extant analyses of *Bella y oscura* (1993) and *La hija del caníbal* (1997) are generally succinct and inconclusive, with the possible exception of Marisa Postlewate's article on the use of the crime novel frame in the latter (Postlewate 2002). Vanessa Knights's section dedicated to these recent novels is, for instance, strikingly limited, and there are no critical approaches to her last novel to date *El corazón del tártaro* (2001). Further, only her first two novels have been selected for translation into English with the titles of *Absent Love: A Chronicle* and *The Delta Function*, both published in 1991. What, then, is the motivation underlying this state of affairs? Why, if Montero's first two novels have been so significantly rejected, even by the author herself, do they stand as the only available referents in the process of Montero's translational diffusion into English?

This incongruity conceals an attempt to create coherence between how Montero has been broached within academia and how she should be perceived by the English-speaking readership: it is, doubtlessly, an act of artificial coherence (for Montero's literary trajectory reveals an ampler scope of interest than the one circumscribed by a feminist positioning), but it is an act that responds to a will to diffuse those works which most shockingly and effectively served a purpose. In this section, I will suggest that these novels' effectiveness is accomplished through the successfully contrived sense of reader identification they effected at the time of their publication and for many years afterwards. In turn, this amply documented sense of reader identification (Drinkwater 1995: 153; Knights 1999: 55) is buttressed, I will argue,

by three main pillars supporting, primarily *Crónica del desamor* and, to a lesser degree *La función Delta*: first, the intense associative function irony triggers off between ironist and audience/readership. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, *Crónica del desamor* is an elaborate exercise of textual irony which aims to undermine the underpinnings of patriarchal imagery in general, and the ambivalent operations of social progress during the Transition period. As such, the novel effects a strong sense of ideological proximity between the author and those readers who, not only identify with and understand the novel's ironic shifts, but also endorse the subversive intentionality they signal.

Secondly, reader identification with the novel is also articulated through the literary extolling of the ordinary and everyday life, with the subsequent promotion of what customarily passes for inconspicuous banality. Literature is, thus rendered, a mirror of daily existence but not simply in that it is articulated through a realist narrative mode (Vanessa Knights poses this factor as the main catalyst of reader identification, Knights 1999: 55), but in that realism here also encircles the representation of those innumerable elements of popular mass culture and the apparently vapid detail of an urban routine. Readers taking up Montero's chronicle at the time it was published may have felt thoroughly represented in those accounts of daily existence crammed with popular brand names, stereotypical conversational encounters, and city spots which make her novel a highly situated portrayal of a specific cultural, temporal and spatial setting. Moreover, there are numerous elements of a specifically female routine which elicited an even more acute sense of identification among women readers.

Finally, and this is a notorious trait in both *Crónica del desamor* and *La función Delta*, reader identification is particularly elicited among female readers through the open and unabashed treatment of specifically female experiences and sexuality. Because the undisguised and transparent representation of women's lives through the prism of their own peripheral position in society, their emotionality and physicality, had remained largely uncharted in the annals of Spanish literature, especially from a pungently critical and transgressive viewpoint, this aspect of Montero's early narrative remains a trailblazing step forward in the creation of feminist narratives in

Spain. Though the novelty of its content has obviously run down and may even seem stale or clichéd to the current reader, the powerful, and in many ways relieving sense of identification female readers must have felt at the time it was published remains a pivotal symbol of its effectiveness in urging social change.

All the aspects outlined above are noticeably present in *Crónica del desamor*, and to a lesser extent, though also in a more elaborate manner, in *La función Delta*. In the present chapter I will propose an analysis of how these three factors of reader identification were relayed in the English translations of the novels. I will suggest that these two novels, generally studied as a coherent block in Montero's opus, articulate their subversive value through discursive, cultural, and sexual proximity projected on the readers. The final question needs to be addressed as to how this pivotal aspect of Montero's early literary project has been dealt with in translations that appear to concentrate on, precisely, the novels' subversive appeal.

## **6.1 Reader Identification through Ironic Discourse: A Translational Analysis**

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the communication of irony is by no means a transparent process. Rather, it invariably involves a camouflaged tergiversation of meanings, always dependent on a process of recontextualisation of the literal ones, which remains for the addressees to decipher. Because it is by definition bilateral, the use of irony necessitates a cooperative relationship between ironist and audience, which terminates in a sort of positive communion between the participants. In other words, the ironist may seem to be distancing herself from a prescribed state of things through the understated exposure of its shortcomings, a potentially non-committed attitude which could be interpreted as presumptuous, indolent or simply "morally ambiguous" (Kaufer 1983: 454), and which at times makes it difficult for the reader to identify the source of many of the statements in the novel. But she is simultaneously carrying out an act of rapprochement towards her knowing audience by disclosing the fissures and hidden polysemy of an apparently

monolithic discourse. Linda Hutcheon has thus explained irony's duality in this sense:

Distance can, of course, suggest the non-committal, the inferred refusal of engagement and involvement [...], and so its more pejorative associations are with indifference [...] or even Olympian disdain and superiority. But distancing reserve can also be interpreted as a means to a new perspective from which things can be shown and thus seen differently. (Hutcheon 1994: 49)

Similarly, the addressed parties, upon detecting the ironic item and extracting its implicit meaning, feel they are finally sharing a secret affinity with the ironist, one that positions them both against the target of irony and against those who are not conversant with its discourse. To use S'Hiri's parlance:

Once the mismatch between what is said and what is meant which is characteristic of irony is overcome, the author and the reader's communication becomes a secret one. It is as if language is made to speak through itself: what is said is allied with what is assumed to create what is meant. (S'Hiri 1992: 183)

This "sense of involvement through mutual participation" (Tannen 1989: 23) makes irony a powerful instrument of social and political positioning: in the process of both generating and decoding irony, participants may feel they are taking part in a surreptitious, but nevertheless persuasive act of subversion, which will fortify their sense of social group and put the stress on the ideological common ground that unites them. Simultaneously, irony effects the exclusion of the 'ironised party', thus nurturing group dismemberment and antagonism. In Montero's *Crónica del desamor*, for instance, patriarchal language is seized upon and exposed, through the ironic recontextualisation of its idioms, proverbs, fixed formulas, and collocations and, on a thematic level, through the ironic treatment of the discriminatory ideology it simultaneously conceals and feeds upon. It is only to be expected that it would be the victims of this established system (that is women, of course, but also other marginalised social groups including homosexuals, elderly people, or drug addicts) that would most readily identify the transgressive nature of Montero's ironic discourse. Concomitantly, the party which constitutes the subject of irony (those stereotypically powerful, inaccessible or unfriendly male figures in her novels who do nothing but to represent in a rather clichéd but, at the time, effective way, the ruling class in the patriarchal pyramid) might not partake in the above-mentioned

sense of 'communion' that the ironic exercise elicits. This might explain, in principle, the widespread sense of rejection that some male readers (and also reactionary women) feel when taking up an avowedly feminist read: because discursive irony is a widely used subversive tactic implemented by these kind of works, they might read themselves into the targeted subject and react disparagingly to this type of narratives as a result of that primary state of discomfiture. A millstone of this kind of reader reaction was Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* (1973), which was as fervently acclaimed by throngs of female readers as it was loathed by its male reviewers. Within the context of the highly dismissive critical backlash her autobiographical novels *Fear of Flying* and *How to Save Your Own Life* elicited, Francis Baumli's "Erica Jong Revisited (or) No Wonder We Men Had Trouble Understanding Feminism" (1985-1986) reaches unsuspected levels of coarseness.

In Montero's early narratives, the marked sense of identification experienced by female readers partly originates in the feeling of ideological affinity yielded by the comprehension of the ironic shift. In this section, I will attempt an analysis of how the various modes of verbal irony exercised in both novels (again, *Crónica del desamor* is, by far, more subversive in this sense) are relayed in their English translations. First, I will look at those instances of irony created through the narrative mismatch between the content described and the style used. Second, I will turn to analyse irony when it is created through a mode of semantic or morphological displacement (collocational clashes, invented words, or unusual derivations), which serve to undermine the assumed fixity of patriarchal language understood as a pre-patterned and immutable block. Finally, I will examine those cases where patriarchal language is directly exposed through the laying bare of its widely ingrained prejudicial phraseology. My aim will be to show that the English translations of Montero's first two novels show on many occasions an inadequate grasp of the purposeful duplicity of the author's ironic discourse. This failure to discern between literal and deliberately sarcastic, and therefore subversive discourse may be explained in a number of ways, which I will try to elucidate.



### 6.1.1 Irony through Stylistic Mismatches

The apparent incongruity created when the mundane and the lofty are merged in narrative discourse creates a strongly defamiliarising effect which, above all, draws the readers' attention to the ordinary, everyday nature of that very item singled out by stylistic slippage. In *Crónica del desamor* this narrative technique acquires a crucial importance since, as it is frequently emphasised throughout the novel itself and by its very title, "estaría bien escribir un día algo. Sobre la vida de cada día, claro está" (CD: 8) But what would be the use, Ana wonders, of such a book?, "escribir un libro así [...] sería, banal, estúpido e interminable, un diario de aburridas frustraciones" (CD: 12). The deliberate treatment of tedium, banality and of an everyday, mechanical existence as literary material is where the overriding, subversive finality of a novel such as *Crónica del desamor* lies; the use of a markedly literary style when relating the numerous stereotyped and commonplace experiences that constitute the thematic core of the novel is a central technique of precisely that process of ironic estrangement whereby women's thoughts, vital experiences, and routines are singled out and evaluated. Let us examine the following examples, where the translations offer a stylistically indiscriminating rendition of the original's peculiar lofty tonality:

#### EXAMPLE 1:

No había que acostarse con los tipos, por supuesto: tan sólo soportar sus soledades etílicas y sus manos volanderas, propensas al toqueteo y a la exploración carnal. (CD: 22)

She did not have to sleep with the customers, of course not; she only had to put up with **their drunken sob sessions and their wandering paws, eager to explore and fondle**. (AL: 12)

#### EXAMPLE 2:

Nada más sentarse, la Pulga le enseña un porro meticulosamente liado **al amparo del canto de la mesa**. (CD: 116)

As soon as she sits down, Pulga pulls out a meticulously rolled joint **from under the table**. (AL: 74)

#### EXAMPLE 3:

Observé con cierta curiosidad cómo el pan, primero flotante, iba escorando hacia la derecha al empaparse, quizá **impelido en su deriva** por el peso de un trocito de jamón adherido a él. El agua iba cubriéndose a su alrededor de **diminutos óvalos aceitosos y la línea de flotación de la miga ascendía imparable**. (FD: 119)

I watched with a certain curiosity as the bread, buoyant at first, drifted off toward the right as it soaked up water, possibly **forced in that direction** by a little piece of ham that was still stuck to it. The surrounding water was filling up with **miniature oil slicks, and the tiny piece of bread was slowly disappearing from sight** (DF: 83)

The highlighted phrases signal the noticeable stylistic mismatch between source text and translation. In the first example, the narrator describes the requirements of a job in a red-light bar in a visibly ironic tone. The fact that the girls working at the bar were not required to sleep with the customers (a fact ironically referred to as a given) is put into contrast with the highly sarcastic exposition of what they had to do instead. Their tasks are described in the text through unexpected collocations (*soledades etílicas* and *manos volanderas*) whose semantic specificity gives the description a highly visual quality. The phrase *propensas al toqueteo y a la exploración carnal* exemplifies a significant shift in style towards an almost technical register, which serves to ridicule the baseness of the activities depicted. Though the rendition *eager to explore and fondle* partially catches this drift, one is left wondering about what precluded the translators from a more literal translation which could have preserved the deliberate, humorously ‘scientific’ description of such a degrading situation for a woman: *hands prone to pawing and carnal exploration*, perhaps?

In the second example, Ana and her friend Pulga have gone out drinking out of inertia. Pulga’s rolling a joint while Ana is at the bar is briskly described in an almost ritualistic manner. The formula *al amparo del canto de la mesa* gives the scene a somewhat stern quality, reinforced by the implicit connotations of clandestinity it evokes. Again, the translation suppresses this correlation between the shift in stylistic register and the banal activity described, by using the neutral *from under the table* instead of a more stylistically conspicuous *under cover of the table*.

The last pair of extracts, taken from *La función Delta*, are a further example of how the author plays with the ironic breach she creates between style and content. While having a bath, the protagonist Lucía observes how a piece of the sandwich she is eating floats around in the water. The markedly unexceptional character of this scene

is brought into contrast with the technical register utilised, crammed with specific terms proper of maritime parlance such as *escorar*, *deriva*, or *línea de flotación*. The inappropriateness of this type of description for the context described yields a defamiliarising effect which is, above all, humorous and ironic. The translated version is almost utterly devoid of these features and concomitantly leaves out the clashing effect referred to above. Beyond the implausible hypothesis that this mode of ironising discourse was not detected by the translators, a further motivation arises, namely, that the somewhat technical register and meticulous lexical choices implemented in these passages was deliberately toned down to efface the ‘translatedness’ of the text. This strategy has been recently observed by Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva as informing Anglo-American translations of French feminist texts (Susam-Sarajeva 2003). As a general trend, the originals’ neologisms, unwieldy erudite flavour and indeed most indicators of these texts’ “emphatically language-bound nature [...], like the psychoanalysis and continental philosophy that go into them, was set aside as irrelevant” (Susam-Sarajeva 2003: 25). A controversial space for interrogation was thus breached, as to what end of the translational movement was being underestimated: the originals’ stylistic sophistication in its full measure or the target readership’s capacity to understand it. Without wanting to imply that linguistic play in Montero’s first two novels is comparable with French feminists’ famous writing practice, I believe some of the strategies arising in the translated texts may be explained by the above-mentioned simplifying technique. In the next section, I provide further evidence towards this conjecture.

### **6.1.2 Irony through Semantic and Morphological Displacement**

The process of generating irony in Montero’s first two novels is also characterised by the creative collocation of semantically clashing terms and the atypical formation of words through unaccustomed derivation and compounding. This technique often results in semantic ambiguity linguistically encoded in the form of unexpected combinations that usually send off a jarring note; ultimately, language is dilated and stretched as literal meanings are superseded by prosthetic ones and initially fixed or unyielding structures are exploited to give rise to an ironically charged narrative which verges on the facetious. To use Deborah Tannen’s words: “It is the play

between fixity and novelty that makes possible the creation of meaning.” (Tannen 1989: 37). But these evasive meanings pose a number of translational quandaries. Generating them brings about a concomitant semantic ambivalence which needs to be somehow pinned down in translation. The following examples may give some indication of what is going on under the surface of some seemingly unproblematic narrative stretches:

EXAMPLE 4:

No se vive en la misma casa que naciste, te desperdigas por una **ciudad antropófaga** y enorme intentando conservar las viejas amistades. (CD: 236)

Almost no one lives in the house where they were born; they are scattered around an enormous **city that swallows them up** and have to struggle to connect with their friends in distant areas. (AL: 160)

EXAMPLE 5:

Un día la conoció en una fiesta. Ella era aún joven y guapa y conseguía parecer envejecida y fea. Tenía la boca dura, una boca cicatrizada a fuerza de decir “no” demasiadas veces. Peinaba unos cabellos imposibles de peluquería cara, vestía ropas de boutique **a medio camino entre la modernidad y la ortopedia**, y de su cuello colgaban sofisticadas cadenas de oro. (CD: 221)

Once Candela ran into her at a party. She was still young and good-looking, yet there was something aged and unattractive about her. Perhaps it was her mouth. It was hardened, a mouth scarred by saying “no” too many times. Or her affected hairdo, obviously from an expensive stylist. Her designer clothes were **an unhappy compromise between fashion and tradition**, too much good jewelry adorned her. (AL: 149)

EXAMPLE 6:

Esta pulga que camina a bandazos por la vida intentando encuadrarse en algún sitio, que fue frívolamente **marxistoide** cuando conoció a Esteban, el que iba para arquitecto (CD: 117)

Stumbling through life trying to find a niche for herself. She was frivolously **Marxist** when she was with Esteban, the architecture student (AL: 75)

The first paired extracts exemplify a frequent feature of Montero’s style that has been poorly heeded in translation, namely, the use of highly specific terms, usually belonging to a different semantic environment, in a discursive context that does not

easily accommodate them. The combination “ciudad antropófaga” above is, in fact, an instance of discursive anthropomorphism whereby the city in *Crónica del desamor*, a rarefied and mercenary Madrid, is attributed an uncommonly distressing, but nevertheless human quality. More importantly, the adjective “antropófaga” shows a definite specificity (as it pertains to the field of anthropological studies, mainly) and belongs to a formal register, thus shocking the reader in the context where it occurs. The English translation, granted, recaptures the signified and offers a plausible paraphrasis of the meaning evoked. However, the expressiveness of the signifier is lost. In the second example, humour is created through precisely the unexpected combination of the semantically conflicting terms *modernidad* and *ortopedia*, when describing a woman’s dressing style. In an exercise of semantic matching which is, in principle, nonsensical, but ultimately expressive and amusing, the author finds an eloquent way of referring to that transitory point in Spanish history when politics, culture, and aesthetics were in a state of constant flux, and, many would argue, also at a complete loss. Again, the translation does justice to the meaning of the original expression, but flattens out the incisiveness of its format. Likewise, in the third example, the creative derivation of the term *marxistoiide* via suffixation (the suffix *-oid* belongs, again, to certain technical uses of scientific parlance) gives rise to an unequivocally ironic effect. The evaluative function of irony is at its most visible here, where the suffix *-oid*, used literally to denote resemblance of form, serves here to evoke the ideological chameleonism or turncoat-like attitude of those women who aim only to secure their partners’ affection by adhering to their political affiliations. As it appears, the translation has not preserved this drift, and the characteristically Monterian acidity of the passage is significantly reduced.

There are numerous examples of this kind of distortion in both *Absent Love: A Chronicle* and *The Delta Function*. More often than not, those words that are purposefully borrowed from a specified semantic field and inserted in a more accessible discursive environment with a view to creating an ironic impact, are not translated with their English counterparts, but are reworded by means of circumlocution. One can only surmise, and regret, that, because these words are generally technical terms (the class of words usually referred to as *cultismos* in

Spanish lexicography due to their morphological closeness to Latin) they are almost invariably obliterated in English for the sake of clarity. The following is a similar example of this type of suppression, taken from *La función Delta* where the scientific *paroxismo* was not translated with the equally specific *paroxysm* but with the stylistically unmarked *frenzy*:

EXAMPLE 7:

Cuando está alegre me saca a empellones de la cama, me obliga a vestirme, me pasea por todo el hospital, con la excusa de que estoy perfectamente bien y de que conviene que me mueva. Su último **paroxismo** eufórico me costó un resfriado espantoso. (FD: 40)

When she is happy she shoves me out of bed, makes me get dressed, and walks me through the hospital, telling me that I am perfectly fine and that it is good for me to move around. Her last euphoric **frenzy** cost me a frightful cold (DF: 24)

All the examples above could be explained as instances of what has been paradoxically described as interlingual pragmatic enrichment in translation (Rosales Sequeiros 2002). In short, this process of interpretative accretion (which typically emerges in those contexts of interlingual and intercultural communication epitomised by the translational movement) implies the semantic completion of a source utterance whose meaning was either vague or ambiguous. As Rosales Sequeiros defined it, “enrichment can be described as an inferential process whose input is, on the one hand, the utterance and, on the other, the context (in which the utterance is processed); and whose output is a complete semantic representation” (Rosales Sequeiros 2002: 1075). All the examples commented above show a varying degree of semantic imprecision which cannot be fully disentangled (at least not without a significant interpretative effort). It is up to the translators’ judgment to acknowledge and favour semantic ambiguity as such, and therefore, to find an equally problematical rendition for the target text, or on the other hand, to opt for an act of disambiguation and to offer an immediately accessible text to their prospective readership. While I do not intend to say this technique is always implausible (from a pragmatic stance, it is in fact a necessary, desirable, and almost mechanical phenomenon), the question of to what extent it is an act of enrichment in the context of literary translation remains disputable.

### 6.1.3 Ironising Patriarchal Language

As was shown in the previous chapter, language in Montero's early narrative unfolds in continuous interplay between what is said and what is truly meant. The double-edged character of her narrative discourse becomes tangibly ironic when she seizes a significant number of widespread idioms, fixed expressions and lexical items supportive of patriarchal prejudice and bias, for the purposes of deriding the system of thought they conceal. Because it is tacitly understood that the author herself does not second any form of sexist inclination, such discourse instantly becomes ironic, and therefore, condemnatory. Again, *Crónica del desamor* relies more solidly on this type of evaluative technique, which we consider central to the novel's subversive zeal, as it serves to effectively dismantle sexist language on its own premises. Let us analyse a few examples:

#### EXAMPLE 8:

Ahora está sentado como un emperador en su trono del "pub", rodeado por los suyos, acariciado por las miradas tiernamente eróticas de **sus hembras**. (CD: 188)

Zorro holds court in the pub like an emperor on a throne, favoured with tenderly seductive glances from **his women**. (AL: 126)

#### EXAMPLE 9:

A veces, en esos minutos muertos de media mañana, mientras los hombres del departamento leían "Marca" o comentaban el último partido del domingo, Antonia se pintaba las uñas en **rojos rabiosos y muy putos**. (CD: 209)

Sometimes, during one of those midmorning lulls in activity when the men in the department leafed through a newspaper or discussed the Sunday soccer match, Antonia would polish her nails **in fiery provocative reds**. (AL: 140)

Whilst the unquestioning or unaware reader would read through these passages with a vague sensation of echo (probably of his/her own acquired beliefs), the alert one would perceive the sarcastic overtones implied in the utterances above, and endorse the author's surreptitious denouncement of the veiled discriminatory attitudes this type of parlance supports. The first example originates in an implicit shift in the narratorial voice: the main narrator's stance is merged with that of one of the most relevant male figures in the novel, Zorro, an eccentric fixture of the night scene

whose nocturnal life symbolises the mixture between innovation and decadence that was the *movida madrileña* in the early eighties. This fusion of two different narrative voices responds to what has been classified in narrative theory as Free Indirect Discourse or Speech (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 110) defined as the discursive intertwining of various voices and, therefore narratorial perspectives, without any defined demarcation of this fluctuation. The purpose of such narrative procedure is to increase textual vividness by integrating the modes, expressions, and attitudes of others and, concomitantly, to indicate the contrast or clash between them, and more importantly, between them and the main narrator's stance. This is, thus, an optimal milieu for the development of interpretation and evaluation, particularly when the voices integrated stand in opposition to the one tacitly or overtly held by the author. In S'Hiri's words:

Thus fused, the narrator and the character's voices constitute a good opportunity for the expression of irony –the practice which thrives on the duplicity of the voice *par excellence*. The intertextual or heteroglossic nature of FIS readily invites the echoic character of ironic utterances. (S'Hiri 1992: 314)

If *Crónica del desamor* has been described by scholars as a polyphonic text (Ahumada Peña 1999: 54), it is in the feature outlined above where its polyphony is most solidly installed: in its discursive versatility, the vivacity with which it incorporates the registers and idiolects of a wide spectrum of interactive situations, from the confessional flavour of female repartee to the cynical or aggressive parlance resulting from the implied relations of power at the workplace, or the trite and abusive, overbearing cadence of Francoist discourse, as was seized by its supporters and instigators. But because the main narrator's stance does not endorse the entirety of these parlanges, a great number of them are incorporated into discourse mainly for the purposes of ironic derision. This is the case, then, of the descriptions in the first example, where a number of recognisable elements of a typically chauvinistic, male-centred parlance, indirectly springing from Zorro's viewpoint, are reproduced. Apart from the references to the women around him in the pub in terms of possession, the most conspicuous sign of his imposingly authoritative approach to the opposite sex is the use of the term *hembras*. The term is utilised here in order to evoke that sexist view of women from a mere physiological frame, and, in this particular context,



Zorro's interest in simply chasing a female specimen for the night, who could have been anyone meeting this rather undemanding requirement. The ironic shift generated through the indirect appropriation of a character's stereotypical expression, and the sense of initial recognition, and final repudiation of this type of parlance that the female readers of *Crónica del desamor* have surely felt, is removed in the translated text, where the neutral "women" is used.

Further, in example 9, there is an analogous obliteration of a distinguishable marker of sexist speech. In this case, the original duplicity of voices is not so easily localised, as there is no discernible character voice permeating through the narrator's exposition (Zorro, above). Here, it is the overarching, patriarchal system of thought that is speaking unmediatedly through the narrator's voice, a patriarchal system exposed in all its magnitude through the unveiling of the double-standards in full force during the Transition period. The narration turns into the description of a woman at Ana's former workplace: the description is conducted in clearly derisive terms, building up the portrait of a stereotypical future *spinster*, with all the negative connotations that the term has accumulated throughout history in an evident process of gender-oriented, semantic degradation. Of this twenty-five year old woman, Antonia, it is said that she always wore make-up and a cloying amount of costume jewelry, "siempre un detalle femenino, como le habían enseñado" (CD: 209); irony is increasingly formed, as the reader recognises the putatively sexist stance from which the depiction springs. The culmination of this portrayal is the extract reproduced above, with the characterisation of Antonia's nail polish colours as "muy putos". This aggressive qualifier encapsulates those images of woman, polarised by the virgin/whore dichotomy, which rose most visibly to the surface at a time when the Spanish society was simultaneously grappling with another dichotomy, namely that one between yesterday's stifling repression and today's apparent liberalism. In such a social context, riddled perforce with double-standards and moral loopholes, women often had to rely on their own intuition as to what being a modern woman entailed: women like Antonia, with their inexperience and ingenuous, unquestioning loyalty to a generic role that stifled them, became an almost anachronistic element for the more progressive societal layers. Simultaneously their eagerness to find a male companion

and the forcedly coquettish artifice they put to work for that purpose (and this newly-acquired license constitutes, in fact, their reading of progress) makes them susceptible to ridicule and ostracism by the more reactionary groups. The adjective *putos* above symbolises precisely this type of double-edged hypocrisy which more often than not ended in acute discrimination, social inadequacy and final redundancy of those who, like Antonia, did not manage to accommodate change gracefully. Again, women seemed to be in a more acutely disadvantageous position, when it came to trying to dodge these forked, new standards of social behaviour. The adjective *putos* plainly serves to expose the ironically more vulnerable position in which most women found themselves throughout the years of change. The translators may have deemed this term overly offensive and opted for a flatter rendition (*provocative*), which recaptures the denotative significance of the adjective *putos*, but obliterates its connotative function, so important in a duplicitous text such as *Crónica del desamor*.

Failure to distinguish between these two complementary levels of discourse in Montero's early novels, that is, between the denotative semantic surface and the connotative, embedded significance which conforms the real ironic texture of her books, yields a limp version of her characteristically double-edged style. This remissness about the text's veritably subversive quality can be attributed to either a lack of familiarity with the writer's discourse or, more aggravatingly, a concealed animadversion towards the mordancy and implicit transgressive values on which the text sustains itself. Ultimately, the sense of identification between communicator and readership that irony elicits, and which was a widely acknowledged asset of Montero's early fiction, is significantly reduced in intensity and, more importantly, in effectiveness.

## 6.2 Reader Identification through Cultural Proximity

Montero's careful observation of the everyday does not merely yield the realistic slant of her early narrative. In *Crónica del desamor* primarily, but also, to a lesser degree, in *La función Delta* and her subsequent novels *Te trataré como a una reina* (1983) and *Amado amo* (1988), she concentrates a large amount of realistic props,

which, on the one hand, serve to localise the novels in a specified spatial and temporal setting (even if merely urban and contemporaneous, as in the case of the more blurred settings of her 1983 and 1988 novels), and on the other, reinforce the readers' sense of identification with the plot, as it is crowded with the immediately recognisable items that configure an urban routine. The book is thus rendered a literary exercise of self-conscious banality, not very distant in ideological and aesthetic terms from the underlying premises of the pop art movement developing in the United States and Europe from the 1960s onwards. Formally, this movement casts off the abstract style favoured in the 1940s and 1950s to exert a re-encounter with the people through a prevailing preoccupation with everyday life as their subject matter. Their raw material is extracted from the increasingly all-embracing fields of mass media and consumer culture: items such as magazine and newspaper cuts, advertisements, movie stills or packaging materials are continually evoked or reutilised with a view to conveying the artistic motif in an accessible and communicative way. By portraying imagery that is familiar to a large audience, this aesthetic practice secures an instantaneous reaction on the part of the public, and consciously instigates a predominantly populist view of art. The artist's pleasure in these "Civilization's icons", as they were termed in Renner's monographic study of Edward Hopper, an eminent forerunner of pop art (Renner 1990: 24), does not only respond to his/her strategic will to reach a larger audience in the most immediate of ways. It also, on a deeper level, responds to a highly ironic vision of civilisation, the shrewd eye with which artists envisage society's new ailments: the understated isolation implicit in every act of material escapism. Richard Hamilton's well known "Just What is it that Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?" (1956) is a prime example of the necessarily sarcastic slant detectable in most pop art.

I would suggest that Rosa Montero's *Crónica del desamor* falls within the scope of this aesthetic current. In the novel, there are innumerable references to the artefacts of everyday life meshed with allusions to the specific historical moment Spain was living in the late seventies. The seemingly realistic surface of the story, articulated through the juxtaposition of intertwined impressions, conversations and polyphonic narration, nonetheless aims at a more profound representation of the social

segregation, lack of communication, and individual confinement that characterised the lives of Spanish men and women in a time of political transformation. The brand names, names of famous department stores, identifiable toponyms, and several other hallmarks of a more and more blurry Spanishness serve, if only temporarily, as the unifying elements of a society that was about to perform one of the most rapid and drastic processes of social conversion in contemporary European history.

In this section, I will look at the ways this central aspect of Montero's first novel has been treated in translation. Again, because the tendency to incorporate readily identifiable elements of quotidian imagery is significantly more noticeable in *Crónica del desamor*, my analysis here will focus on this novel and on its English translation. In short, I will examine the way the translated text exemplifies an economics of suppression of this manifest tendency in the novel, even when the novel is introduced in the American edition as an account "at a very close range of concrete daily incidents, the many small things that give life its flavor" (De la Torre and Glad 1991: xiii). Further, I will try to demonstrate that the translational strategy applied ultimately harms one of the central aims of the novel, namely, to construct a portrayal of life's vicissitudes and routines from a distinctly female stance.

### 6.3.1 *Cotidianidad* and Trademarks in *Crónica del desamor*: The Construction of a National Routine

Let us look at the following paired examples, where a number of key elements of the Spanish political and social scene during the Transition are brought into the fore:

#### EXAMPLE 10:

Desde una cartulina brillante, **Fraga** mira al objetivo con ojos bizquisimos [...] (CD: 6)

From a glossy picture **the leader of the conservative party** stares back through crossed eyes [...] (AL: 2)

#### EXAMPLE 11:

Piensa Ana que el desencanto político, tantas veces esgrimido últimamente, es un invento del **gobierno Suárez** [...] (CD: 42-43)

Ana thinks that the public's disenchantment, so often mentioned lately, is an invention of the new government, **the Christian Democratic party** [...] (AL: 26)

#### EXAMPLE 12:

Ahora Antonio vaga por el mundo un poco loco, decididamente estupefacto, ansioso de vivir y de ser joven, permitiéndose hablar mal de **Carrillo**, pero sólo con los antiguos compañeros. (CD: 102)

And so Antonio wanders about a little crazy, rather stupefied, anxious to live and to be young, allowing himself to disagree with **the chairman of the party**, but only among comrades. (AL: 65)

As can be seen in all the examples above, those culture-specific items that refer to a specifically political figure or entity are systematically shaded through an explicating translational strategy that dissolves their original specificity. The phenomenon of explicitation in translation has been defined and investigated abundantly in the literature of translation studies (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 55; Klaudy 1998: 80-84; Baker 2000). In stylistic terms, it can be characterised as the process whereby the translator inserts information in the target text "in a more explicit form than the original" (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 55). The type of explicitation accompanying cultural transposition is generally referred to as "pragmatic explicitation" (Klaudy 1998: 83), and it involves translating a culture-specific item with a more or less accurate definition of what it represents, which is then incorporated in the text. This procedure is particularly practical when the cultural background supporting the item is too precise, too idiosyncratic or, simply, too large to be taken as part of the target readership's knowledge. A definition is thus inserted, which simultaneously refers to the nature of the item and gives a small amount of adjacent information which the translators judge pertinent and relevant for the reading to continue. All the culture-specific items highlighted above are explicitated in translation. This remains *prima facie* a plausible strategy, given the marked specificity of the original items, which pertain to a country's historical memory of a crucial political moment, still vividly engraved in the collective conscience. An accurate exercise of translational explicitation would have kept the proper names and provided a consecutive, if brief, informative commentary which would not hinder or interrupt the textual flow. As it stands, however, the translational

strategy implemented in the text does the original novel a disservice. On the one hand, the names of the politicians and parties referred to are obliterated altogether and substituted with a brief definition of what they stand for. Secondly, and more aggravatingly, the definitions inserted are misleading and erroneous: the party founded by Adolfo Suárez, the first president of Spain after the dictatorship and during two terms of office, was not the Christian Democratic party. The Christian Democratic party was only one of the political groups, among many others, which joined the UCD, the centrist coalition promoted by Adolfo Suárez, in power until 1982. In a similar turn of equivocal transposition, to translate Francisco Carrillo, the leader of the Spanish communist party (PCE) and a key figure in the anti-francoist resistance and during the Transition, with a vague “the chairman of the party” leaves the target reader in an undesirable informational limbo. Ultimately, a translational strategy which could be in principle justifiable, that is, to explicitate a series of culture-specific items for the sake of informational clarity, even at the expense of the original work’s attempt to create a highly localised rendition of the socio-political setting at the time, turns into an exercise of deceptive transposition. Moreover, Montero’s highly personal and valuable account of the Spanish political and social scene from a journalist’s stance (it is not difficult to identify the author’s voice and perceptions in much of what Ana, the fictional protagonist, says or thinks) constitutes a distinctive and pertinent account of the historical facts, which is not justly valued in the translation.

As was previously stated, another conspicuous factor in Montero’s literary rendition of daily vicissitudes is her constant dropping of brand names and explicit lettering of easily recognisable trademarks. This is perhaps the most glaring element of *cotidianidad* that the author integrates in her narrative and elicits a strong sense of reader identification, given the readers’ assumed familiarity with the products mentioned. The following examples may serve to illustrate one of the translational strategies most frequently implemented when it comes to the treatment of brand names, that is, the substitution of the original name with a generic term for the item that the trademark represents:

EXAMPLE 13:

Chamaco sigue jugando al flipper, el Curro pinta, con un dedo mojado en **trinaranjus**, dibujos invisibles sobre el mármol roto de la mesa, Ana está comentando no sé qué sobre José-María-el-de-siempre, como ella dice, todo de un tirón, y a la Pulga se le hace difícil entender las palabras de su amiga. (CD: 95)

Chamaco keeps playing pinball, Curro dips his finger in **soda** and draws invisible sketches on the marble tabletop, and Ana is muttering something about same-ol'-Jose Maria, as she calls him, all in one breath. Pulga is having a hard time understanding Ana's words. (AL: 60-61)

#### EXAMPLE 14:

Esta mañana se han levantado tardísimo, y con las prisas –los niños no llegaban al colegio– ha mezclado inadvertidamente **Nescafé** y **Nesquik** en las tres tazas, sin darse cuenta de ello hasta tomar un adormilado trago del mejunje. (CD: 217)

This morning they all woke up late, and in the rush –the kids would never make it to school in time– she inadvertently mixed **coffee** and **chocolate** in all-three cups and did not realise it until, still groggy, they had a sip of the brew. (AL: 146)

#### EXAMPLE 15:

Cuatro días después fue clausurada la sección abierta definitivamente, no sin que antes Margarita, una psicótica de diecinueve años, se encerrara en el retrete y patentizara su miedo y su protesta de la única forma que podía: amputándose la lengua de raíz con una **gillete** subrepticia. (CD: 224)

The clinic was closed down for good four days later, but not before a nineteen-year-old psychotic girl named Margarita locked herself in the bathroom and gave vent to her fear and indignation the only way she could: amputating her tongue at the root with a **razor blade** someone slipped her. (AL: 151)

The sense of cultural proximity elicited by the continuous reference to easily identifiable trademarks is analogous to, as was previously suggested, the effect that the artistic practice currently known as packaging (itself a ramification of pop art) may also call forth. In general terms, by extracting elements of a specifically commercial environment, and thus restricted to the particular aesthetic guidelines of merchandising, and inserting them in a totally unexpected context such as plastic arts or literature, the artist/writer seeks to elicit the public's sense of initial aberration and final identification with the creative assemblage. In the extracts above, Montero seeks to shock the reader through the unexpected reference of items extraneous to a literary context, namely, the highly quotidian label *Trinaranjus* (a popular, fruity soft

drink in Spain), as well as the international *Nescafé*, *Nesquik* and *Gillete*. Thus, her portrayals of markedly banal and ordinary scenes gain in exactitude and vividness, concomitantly eliciting the readers' total recognition of the descriptions. While it is true that translating these items may be difficult (a counterpart in the target culture may not always be available and, even if it is, using it would involve a significant exercise of cultural transposition), the translation of those brands which are widely known and recognised internationally should not, in principle, be systematically discarded. This seems to be precisely the most recurrent option in *Absent Love: A Chronicle*.

An alternative technique for the translation of trademarks is their total obliteration in the target text. See, for instance, the following examples:

EXAMPLE 16:

Pero algo más de fantasía erótica debía de guardar esa cabeza estúpidamente inocente, recuerda Ana ahora, porque un día le enseñó un paquetito del **Corte Inglés**, que llevaba cuidadosamente oculto en su bolso. (CD: 209)

But there must have been more erotic adventures inside her vapidly innocent head, Ana seems to remember, because one day Antonia showed her a package that she was cautiously hiding in her purse. (AL: 140)

EXAMPLE 17:

Han discutido posturas y abstenciones frente a las futuras elecciones; han hablado del libro de cartas de Kafka a Felice, del País Vasco y también de las rebajas de agosto en **Galerías Preciados**. (CD: 214)

They have discussed their possible preferences in the upcoming elections, talked about Kafka's letters to Felice, about the Basque Country, about the end-of-the-summer sales. (AL: 143)

By suppressing the explicit names of two popular Spanish department stores in the extracts above, the translators skirt the admittedly complex task of searching for alternative techniques that would maintain the target text at an equivalent level of culture specificity. The result is one of neutralisation of the original's distinctive interplay between indirect confessional narration and social exposition through cultural proximity with the readership. As Judith Drinkwater explained, Montero's readership "may be presumed to be in the main urban, middle-class and relatively



affluent” (Drinkwater 1995: 159). For this reading public, the brand names, names of chains, and the like that are continuously referred to in the course of the novel are the primary artefacts of their everyday activities; to integrate them in the narrative flow is the most effective way the author could have conceived to make the readers recognise their own occupations and routines, and hence their own thoughts, their own problems, their own struggle, ultimately themselves, in the fictional construct. To obliterate these culture-specific items is, if you will pardon the disconcerting comparison, like removing the labels from Andy Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Cans*.

### 6.3.2 The Construction of a Woman’s Routine

In her study of Rosa Montero’s literary trajectory, Haydée Ahumada Peña emphasises *Crónica del desamor*’s specific value as a novel that aims to portray not only a national, urban routine, but also one that is significantly tinged with a woman’s vision of it. To use her own words:

El universo que aquí se convoca guarda una resonancia prioritariamente femenina, es la cotidianidad de la mujer contemporánea en su tensa mediación entre el mundo público y el mundo privado y con especial reconocimiento de una identidad donde las marcas individuales se despliegan para leer la socialización que determina el colectivo. (Ahumada Peña 1999: 46)

Though discourse in Montero’s first novel consists of the multilayered assemblage of various voices, the overarching narratorial stance continues to be female. As a consequence, the text is significantly interspersed with indicators of what could be termed a feminine routine, not described from a prototypical woman’s stance (the women that populate Montero’s early narratives, although symptomatic of the change, are but a barely representative sample of the conditions and intellectual equipment of women in Spain after Franco’s dictatorship), but nevertheless succeeding in portraying the more or less adroit ways in which women had to juggle with apparent social progress, opportunism, and discrimination in their lives. Hence, the text meshes references to the female characters’ involvement with social causes or the tensions and intricacies of the workplace with allusions to childbearing, late-night shopping or period pains. More specifically, there are numerous references to products of a specifically female use, with the concomitant effect of gender-marked cultural specificity that they trigger. The following examples are aimed to illustrate

how this central aspect of Montero's first novel is articulated and the inadequate treatment it was given in the English translation:

EXAMPLE 18:

Intenta recordar si tiene **melabones** en la caja de las viejas medicinas para neutralizar el dolor de la extracción o el de los ovarios [...] (CD: 9-10)

wonders if she has any **pills** for her painful tooth or ovaries [...] (AL: 4)

EXAMPLE 19:

Prohibiciones, prohibiciones, prohibiciones. Todos esos tabúes inútiles y necios que te obligan a pensar que “eso” es estar enferma. Y como tantas otras, aún mantiene Ana el viejo hábito y se descubre todavía hoy diciendo “estoy mala”, ahora, a sus treinta años, aún sabiendo que sí puede bañarse, que puede comer helados, que da lo mismo que se lave el pelo con **el cordón del tampax** rozándole las nalgas. (CD: 57)

Restraints, restraints, restraints. All those stupid and unnecessary taboos that make you think that “that” is sickness. And, like so many others at thirty, Ana still finds herself saying “I have the curse”, still and at thirty, even though she well knows that it is perfectly fine to shower and to eat ice cream, that it makes no difference if she washes her hair with the **tampon string** dangling between her thighs. (AL: 103)

The extracts above demonstrate the high degree of cultural specificity with which women's experiences and routine activities are described in the novel. In the original, two widely known brands are mentioned that refer the reader to a woman's artefacts of common use, namely, the all-purpose painkillers *Melabón* and the international tampon trademark *Tampax*, whose use has become so widespread that the brand name customarily stands for the product it represents in everyday language, as a result of a typically metonymic linguistic usage. The translators' choice to substitute these terms with a generic reference to the items they represent is rather unjustifiable, as the sense of cultural immediacy they provoke is obliterated tout court. This translational turn warps the preponderance of a female view of ordinary life, one of the novel's central aims, and interrupts the process of (female) reader identification that the textual references to such familiar artefacts were designed to yield.

In short, what these alterations in the translation ultimately effect is a significant devaluation of the author's endeavour to recreate an easily recognisable routine through the eyes of a working woman. More generally, the novel's strategic merger

of controversial material and an eminently realist format (few things can indeed prove more realist and tangible than the brand names that the author inserts in the text) is drastically impaired. This fusion of the literary and the popular, articulated through the countless culture-specific items that cram the novel, and which, as Vanessa Knights stated “allows for a wide readership of texts of polemical content” (Knights 1999: 85-86), is a central subversive aspect of Montero’s early narrative that has not been relayed in translation.

## 6.4 Reader Identification through the Treatment of Sexuality

Seen from the current complexity of gendered critical and creative stances, the persistently realistic thrust permeating the emerging feminist narratives of the early eighties in Spain seems rather stale and infertile nowadays. These were narratives that were aimed to represent, in a rather inflexible fashion, the state of discrimination and social inequality in its most primary sense, with which women at the time had to grapple on a day-to-day basis. For this purpose, the narrative framework was customarily testimonial, the characters created responded to easily recognisable stereotypes that facilitated the female readers’ identification with the situations depicted and the style tended towards a hybridisation of literary and popularised genres and parlances that rendered the text simultaneously transgressive and readily accessible. In retrospect, this “literatura testimonial/propagandística” (González Fernández 2003: 51) may read as an exaggerated or caricature-like representation of what being a woman may have entailed in a not-so-distant time. However, this type of narrative fulfilled a crucial function in the process of creating faithful and reliable images of women at a time when an increasingly demanding and sensitive female readership required it. The rigorously dichotomic and partisan nature of these narratives -many critics, including the translators of *Crónica del desamor* Cristina de la Torre and Diana Glad, have in fact underscored the lack of a supportive male presence in this type of novels (De la Torre and Glad 1991: xvii)- give a measure of the compelling urgency with which they were written.

Among the various defining features of these early feminist narratives, a subgenre that has often been identified with market-oriented literary trends and the writing of

tailor-made best-sellers (Ciplijauskaitė 1988: 191) is their unabashed treatment of sexuality, particularly from a woman's stance. The debate between literary recourse to female sexuality and commercial aspirations continues today, particularly in critics' recurrent focus on the figure of Lucía Etxebarria and her work. The nub of the matter has been pertinently explained by Silvia Bermúdez:

The reason to continue talking seems to rest in the openly "let's-talk-about-sex-while laughing-all-the-way-to-the-bank" premise that supposedly guides her writing, and that it is stirring too many complex issues that are easily brushed aside as either "bad taste" or "lack of authentic literary value. (Bermúdez 2002: 224)

Again, this tendency can nowadays be viewed as a further lure these narratives presented, but one that needs to be superseded by current gender-marked literary creation if it is to avoid an undesirable state of thematic ghettoisation. As Luísa Villalta asserts in her article "Por que os homes non nos len?", current women-authored narratives need to overcome that "interese específico polos temas eróticos (ese ámbito insaciábel de repetidas novidades)" (Villalta 2003: 68) if they are to eventually enter the realm of 'normality' or 'non-exceptionality' that some critics propose as the ultimate goal of the feminist struggle in the literary scene.

Hindsight should however not prevent us from valuing these narratives in their own terms and their forthright treatment of female sexuality as one of their most effective subversive aspects at the time. In her panoramic overview of feminist authors in Spain since 1900, Catherine Davies comments on this momentous shift in the history of Spanish literature:

A strong current of quality feminist narrative has emerged in the last decade, finally free from censorship constraints, and some authors are rapidly gaining international recognition. [...] Their quest is to create a woman's mode of writing that can adequately express life from a woman's point of view; that can find the point of intersection between personal and social change as part of a conscious feminist strategy and that does not flinch when expressing sexuality. This is new to the annals of Spanish literature. (Davies 1991: 215)

Both *Crónica del desamor* and *La función Delta* can be said to contribute to this shift. *Crónica's* "unprecedented use of sexually explicit language and content" (Harges 2000: 11) is re-elaborated upon in Montero's second novel, where a wider spectrum of sexual settings and possibilities is exploited. Whilst *Crónica del desamor* tackles incisively the patent lack of communication between the sexes and

the ways sexual relationships are manifestly harmed due to this (the incessant parade of unfortunate sexual encounters reinforces the idea of sex as a permanent site of tension between men and women), in *La función Delta* a series of more varied and optimistic sexual settings are depicted. Lucía, the first-person narrator and sole focaliser of the story (she is, in fact, the writer of both the memoirs and the diary whose intercalation gives shape to the novel), recalls her sexual relationships with Hipólito and Miguel with nostalgic affection and fondness; even her sexual encounter with Ricardo, the only friend who visits and cares for her in hospital, is described by her in warm and affectionate words, an aspect of Montero's second novel which is a meaningful lack in the first one.

Be it under a bitter or more positive light, both novels approach sexuality unabashedly. In the following extracts, taken from *La función Delta* this time, I will try to show how this fundamental aspect of Montero's early narrative goes unheeded in the English translation. While the translation's afterword aptly broaches the socio-political context in which the novel was published, emphasising the country's crucial and "sometimes disorienting transition from a suppressed to a free society" (Easton and Molina Gavilán 1991: 205), as well as the author's belonging to a "new, outspoken group of women writers who deal openly with the conflicts and doubts that many Spaniards, especially women, have faced during the period of Transition" (Easton and Molina Gavilán 1991: 266), the translation produced seems to be at odds with the original's subversive value. Let us examine the following excerpt, where a central sexual scene between Lucía and Miguel is uninhibitedly narrated:

#### EXAMPLE 20

-Seguro- contesté con turbia y desfallecida voz. Los dedos de Miguel, alegres y aventureros, exploraban mis rincones con delicado avance.

-¿Te gusta?- musitó-. Enséñame, enséñame a quererte chiquitina.

-Sí...- suspire-. Me encanta, me encanta que me acaricies en... **en la puntita de... ejem... del clitoris.**

-Que te acaricie en la puntita de tu coño, de tu sexo prodigioso, que es como una flor de carne suave, de tu sexo que es como una fuente de agua dulce, de tu sexo de espuma de mar, de pura seda... (FD: 314)

I'm sure" I answered faintly.

Miguel's fingers explored my curves with delicate progress.

"Do you like that?" he murmured, "Teach me, teach me how to love you, my little one."

"Yes" I sighed. "I love it, I love it when you caress **the tip of my... of my...**".

He smiled to himself calmly.

"When I stroke the tip of your wonderful sex, like a smooth flower of flesh, of pure silk..." (DF: 220)

The exercise of suppression in this passage is immensely detrimental to the original's subversive quality. In the source text, Lucía recalls the night she and Miguel (the man who was to be her lifelong companion) meet each other after Miguel's week out of town. Lucía, who has spent six days trying fruitlessly to devote more time to herself, but has been instead engrossed in her own anxieties over the pending premiere and her emotional dilemma between passionate love/Hipólito and companionship/Miguel, now confesses her own distress to Miguel, probably the most endearing male figure in the whole of Montero's literary production. After Lucía's unrestrained outpouring of her fears and doubts, they begin to make love, trying consciously to communicate with each other at all times and to overcome the prescribed gender roles that, they know, end up stifling human relationships. The words they exchange in this process towards sexual communion are therefore highly valuable for the understanding of the scene's truly radical quality. Further, the female protagonist's initially hesitant but finally clear enunciation of the word *clitoris*, and the fact that her words are instantaneously echoed by her male companion in a surge of excitement that fluctuates freely between the poetic and the dirty, signals what appears to be the author's proposed answer to the questions posed in her first novel.

The translators' decision to obliterate the word *clitoris* from Lucía's intervention and to reduce significantly Miguel's emotive verbal outburst (his almost fluid concatenation of metaphors of the female sex, as well as the deliberate roughness of his words is visibly curtailed) can only be explained (though not justified) as an act of covert prudery. One is left wondering what kind of tacit double standards underlie

a translational practice which highlights in the form of explanatory paratext the importance of the original work as one of the first free literary works in contemporary Spanish literature, and then resorts to covert strategies of suppression specifically aimed to efface the original's very signs of creative freedom.

More specifically, the consequences of this translational option are, again, highly damaging for the transmission of a literary work presented as 'feminist', or at least, as a work which deals with women's concerns and tries to supersede the silences and restrictions historically imposed on women authors. A further example may help to illustrate how the translation seems to annul the unequivocal transgressive force of the original, when it comes to the expression of an assured female sexuality:

EXAMPLE 21:

Y mientras me besaba los párpados con entregado gesto, yo me zambullí en la dulzura de su mirada malva y **me sentí poseedora de una paz intensa**. (FD: 315)

And while he kissed my eyelids with a gesture of surrender, I dove into the sweetness of his gaze and **was possessed by an intense peace**. (DF: 220)

As it appears, the original text places the emphasis on Lucía as the self-possessed agent in the described amorous scene. The syntactic construction *me sentí poseedora* denotes the overwhelming calm and sense of control that Lucía feels after this thoroughly fulfilling encounter with Miguel, an encounter which, as Lucía will recall in the last days of her life, helped her choose his sincere companionship over Hipólito's flickering commitment towards her. The translation reverses this syntactic-semantic correlation by substituting it with a passive construction, whereby Lucía is now complaisantly seized by that surge of serenity. This seemingly innocuous twist in the translational transfer nonetheless effects a meaningful alteration in the readers' perception of the female protagonist's posture: from the agent of her own decisions (the possessor), finally ready to take control of her future, to the passive being (the possessed), the recipient of other people's actions or decisions. The active-to-passive syntactic transformation has been analysed as a form of devolution in the literature of feminist translation studies (Parker 1993: 323; von Flotow 2000: 22). By way of rearranging the functional slots of agent and object in the sentence, the original unsettling weight carried by a gender-marked, active subject is made instead to

undergo passively the actions of external factors. This apparently unobjectionable grammatical shift, often simply required by target-language linguistic structures and thus justified by translators, is in fact a key mediating factor in the weighted transformation from decision to imposition, from mobility to determinism, from visibility to invisibility. Feminist translators have called for a greater awareness of this depriving move:

Translation as a feminist practice shares with women's writing the intention of recasting women's role in language, changing her place from phallogentric object of discourse to gynocentric subject/producer of discourse. Making the female body a generative locus of speech means to inaugurate women's linguistic agency as speakers and writers. Yet sometimes it happens in the passage from SL to TL, a feminist text written/read in the active voice is rewritten in the passive tense, an error of translation that subverts feminist intent. (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 150-151)

As we have seen, both English translations of Montero's first novels apply a number of strategies that are somewhat detrimental for the works' feminist value. While in *Absent Love: A Chronicle*, the prevalence of a female perspective in the description of the multifarious routine scenes that cram the novel is significantly weakened through the effacement of their cultural specificity (a modification which subsequently reduces the prospects for female readers' identification), in *The Delta Function*, there is an evident severing (indeed a denounceable act of textual ablation) of the original's forthright treatment of female sexuality as a site for agency and self-fulfillment. For a novel that was published in 1981, only three years after the establishment of the Spanish Constitution and in a state of continuous social and political flux (the frustrated coup d'état by *Teniente Coronel Tejero* happened in that year), uncensored creative freedom was still an unexplored terrain, especially for women writers. The explication of the word *clitoris* is therefore not the result of a gratuitous paroxysm of literary sensationalism, but of a contrived and deliberate act of subversion which, at the time, served to place the author and her novels together with that emerging group of outspoken writers Catherine Davies refers to in her survey. The fact that this very word was barred from the translated text gives the measure of the tremendous act of amputation carried out by the translators, and reinforces the more than tangible myth of the "mujer amputada de sí misma" as occurred to Lucía while reflecting upon the nature of her many complexes and



anxieties. Curiously, Lucía's momentous enunciation of this realisation is also tellingly removed in the translation:

Y, sin embargo, yo, que también poseía un mundo propio, que tenía mis películas, mis ambiciones, mis placeres intelectuales y estéticos, mis inquietudes plurales, sin embargo yo, digo, que poseía objetivamente todo cuanto "ellos" poseían, era incapaz de contentarme con mi espacio, me asfixiaba, me sentía cercada de ausencias y estrecheces, embargada de urgencias sin motivos razonables. Como aplastada por siglos de educación femenil que hubieran robado mi integridad, mi paz, mi redondez. Era la maldición de la mujer-pareja, de la mujer-carente, de la mujer-apoyo y apoyada. **Es la maldición de la mujer amputada de sí misma.** (FD: 61-62)

I also had my own world –my movies, my ambitions, my intellectual pleasures and tastes, my own numerous worries. But nevertheless, I, who objectively possessed everything that they possessed, was incapable of being contented with my own space. I suffocated myself, I felt hemmed in by my wants and needs, weighed down by inexplicable urgencies. It was as though I had been assaulted by centuries of education, a feminine education that had cheated me of my integrity, my inner space, my wholeness. It was the curse of the couple-woman, the lacking woman, the supporting and supported woman. (DF: 40)

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to show that the translational movement of Rosa Montero's literary production into English has been stymied in two significant ways. First, an economics of selection has underwritten this process, as is visible from the fact that only her first two novels have been made available to an English-speaking readership. This state of affairs may be explained by the fact that it is also these novels that have elicited a more extensive critical response. However, it stands in stark contrast with the author's and her critics' ongoing questioning of these novels' literary value. The underlying key to such a restricted availability of Montero's work in English, corroborated by the lack of new translations as is perceived over time, may be explicated partly as a particular type of genre-homogenisation, which other scholars have detected in a variety of case studies. Susam-Sarajeva's explanation of why it is mainly Cixous's theoretical writing that is available in English translation by observing that "for their self-definition and self-consolidation as 'pragmatic' and

‘action-oriented’, Anglo-American feminists *needed* Cixous the theorist” (Susam-Sarajeva 2002: 126, emphasis in the original), is a valuable example in this regard. Further, a mode of affiliative homogenisation can also be invoked, whereby Montero’s literary trajectory has been made to retrograde perpetually toward its early feminist thrust. The telling availability of only *Absent Love: A Chronicle* and *The Delta Function* in the Anglo-American market seems to have typecast Montero’s work indefinitely as militant and feminist, an allegation which continues to be a hotspot within critical debate, apparently, much to Montero’s own dismay (Montero in Escudero 1997: 336).

A closer look at the textual configuration of these translations shows, moreover, a generating force almost antithetical to the selective principles that arguably informed their appearance. Instead of emphasising, or merely protecting, the original texts’ resistant features, the translators often chose to obliterate them. The bowdlerising strategies outlined in this chapter counterpose the translators’ cognisance of the texts’ original values and techniques, of which convincing evidence is provided in the introductions that accompany both publications. On a larger scale, they betray the critical and editorial milieu in which they were produced, namely The European Women Writers Series run by The University of Nebraska Press.

This discrepancy between critical discourse on one front, and translated output on the other (most flagrantly contraposed when operating within the same volume, as is the case with the existing clash between introductory paratext and translation in *Absent Love: A Chronicle* and *The Delta Function*) raises serious questions as to the perceived (feminist) status of Montero’s work and the alarming frequency with which this is usually compromised by dint of covert strategies. The practice of translation, as opposed to other types of critical exegesis, has been historically most conducive to this type of lapses or transgressions because the conflation between translation and ideology has not always been acknowledged. Hence, intratextual scrutiny was often dismissed as superfluous or unworthy. One of the goals of this chapter has been to demonstrate that while an apparently consensual Anglo-American critical colloquy has canonised Montero as a feminist author, the translations available betray the gender-centred act of cooperation they claim to perform. Further reflexion and

research on the possible motivations for the controversial changes in the translations are in order, which would give rise to meaningful questions touching on (self-)censorship, editorial guidance, or intercultural appropriation. On the whole, more light would be shed on the composite nature of the critical reception these authors have had abroad.

## Conclusion

The thesis set out with a general observation in mind, namely that there has been an ongoing sense of frustration traceable in a considerable number of publications coming from gender-oriented strands of Anglo-American Hispanism. This sense of frustration has taken shape in what could be described as a specific tug of war between many contemporary Spanish women authors and the Anglo-American critics that have delved into their literary output. The axis of dispute concerns the validity of the feminist label generally applied to their work, or, put differently, the applicability of gender-centred analytical tools to literary works that have seemingly eluded such forms of classification over the years (a caveat usually provided by the authors themselves). Schematically, this tug of war has become manifest in at least three critical manoeuvres traceable across the secondary literature under review.

The first one places the original author in the spotlight and contends that she is a feminist despite her own professed distancing from the label. This critical stance usually tackles the sociocultural milieu in which these authors operate, that is the Spanish critical scene and publishing industry, and defends the thesis that women authors assimilate the hostility with which an openly belligerent feminist agenda is still received, and try to pre-empt it by detaching their work from feminist action.

The second and third ones are critic-oriented and highlight the system of values and expectations informing the receiving outlook. One detectable tendency has been to classify the original author as feminist despite her own counter-allegations, on the grounds that her work is seen to meet the conditions for feminist literary creation (and action in general) as is culturally stipulated in the Anglo-American context. Predictably, this *modus operandi* has generated its own underside, namely the third traceable critical trend. A number of authors began to be approached and analysed according to this procedure but have gradually been the object of mounting suspicion as to their veritable feminist worth. In other words, certain authors were initially classified as feminist but have been recently disqualified as such on the grounds that

their literary programmes have proved not to concur with the received notions of what feminist literary practice entails.

Tensions such as these, which are by no means mutually exclusive but rather operate in an interlocking fashion, have characterised the critical reception and dissemination of the three authors studied in the thesis. The works of Mercè Rodoreda, Esther Tusquets, and Rosa Montero have been held under scrutiny for more than two decades now and critical dialogue on them has progressed in parallel with constant negotiations along these lines. In the case of Rodoreda, Anglo-American critical figurations have consistently underscored the feminist value of her work, an expansive critical project that has evolved despite the author's well-known disengagement from feminism in her lifetime, and in opposition to Catalunya-based publications on her. In the case of Tusquets, feminist enquiry on her work has followed a parabolic pattern, going from ebullient critical production centring on the exemplarily feminist worth of her novels (attributable mainly to her distinct writing style and the lesbian subject matter often tackled), to more cautious figurations whereby presentiments of a less liberational agenda underpinning Tusquets's output are voiced. In the case of Montero, feminist critical appraisals of her early narrative have had to confront constant invective about the works' dubious literary worth. Simultaneously, critical dialogue on her first two novels revolved around a series of analytical fixtures that over time deteriorated into almost derogatory allegations about her work. Among these, comments on her first novel's propagandistic nature or journalistic style featured prominently.

What united these three authors under the thesis's metacritical gaze is that they have all been made meaningful in Anglo-American critical circuits through a foregrounding of their works' merit as women-centred narratives. This process of dissemination was carried out through sustained critical activity on them and through the selective translation of some of their works. The received perception is that the intersection of critical dialogue and translations has been in this case a coordinated and fruitful one. Though critical commentary on the extant translations is eloquently sparse (usually formulated in the form of asides or in reviews), the generally encomiastic observations I have been able to locate, together with many critics'

acknowledgement of the translations in their cited references as valid working tools, indicate that the translated texts are perceived to be welcome by-products of the critical enthusiasm on these authors and, ultimately, a token of the successful process of diffusion which brought them to international prominence as primarily women authors.

In the thesis I trust to have made evident two related aspects of this transmission: on the one hand, that scholars' ongoing negotiation on and around the original works' feminist valence is, in fact, the lifeblood of the gender-oriented strands of Anglo-American Hispanism. In the same way that the "rejection of the term "feminist"" has come to be considered an almost definitional creative positioning of a great many contemporary Spanish women authors (Tsuchiya 2003: 215), critical activity on these authors has accordingly revolved around the description, justification, and ultimate overcoming of this phenomenon, with a view to rendering the original works relevant and deserving of scholarly research. I have tried to demonstrate in this regard that the persistent critical focus on the feminist worth of these works has engendered its own interpretative metaphors, loopholes, and commonplaces (as in Rodoreda, Tusquets, and Montero, respectively) at times to the detriment of more capacious forms of dialogue around them.

Secondly, I have tried to show that the translational project accompanying the critical one is perceived to participate in the outlined gender-centred process of transmission, but in reality undermines it in many significant ways. As the exercise of textual juxtaposition carried out was intended to evince, a variety of the translational strategies implemented in the target texts directly antagonise the claims and stakes adduced in the secondary literature as to why these authors deserved the attention of feminist critics in British and American universities. In the case of David Rosenthal's translations of Mercè Rodoreda's female first-person narratives, a variety of textual tactics were identified that put at risk the readers' apprehension of the original narrative voice, repeatedly described in the criticism as that of an ingenuous, unsophisticated, and infantile woman. In the case of Tusquets, the translations carried out by feminist academics, designed to complement the critical literature, stand in stark contrast with Bruce Penman's translation *Love is a Solitary Game*. His

translation overlooks both the original's stylistic façade and the explicitly erotic detail it offers, primarily from a woman's stance. While the study of this particularly dissonant translation in the light of the other three, analysed in the thesis as informed and attentive works of transposition, may seem almost anecdotal, the fact that Penman's text has not been significantly interrogated to date, let alone superseded by a second translation, remains an important fact, and a curious token of the extent to which the manifold intricacies of the transmission of these authors into English has not been adequately acknowledged. In the case of Montero, the translations again exhibited a fractional understanding of *Crónica del desamor*'s stylistic duplicity and of the functionality of its cultural specificity. While stylistic transposition was not such a decisive factor in the translation of *La función Delta*, the target text is similarly at variance with the original's value as regards the handling of female sexuality. One of the last textual examples studied in the thesis, concerning the obliteration of the word *clitoris* in the translation, was offered as perhaps the most startling proof of the discrepancy between critical figurations and translational discourse on these authors, and, more precisely, between the avowed (and widely perceived) significance of the translated texts as an artefact of gender-aware dissemination and the actual acts of gender-aware obliteration that they ensconce.

A full cycle is thus delineated that starts with the critics' initiating perception that literature by women authors coming from Spain is inhibited both by the receiving outlook and by the authors themselves, who continue to minimise their importance as feminist narratives, thus bowing to, and perpetuating, the same system that puts a strain on their creative freedom. Consequent upon this detection, Anglo-American critics embarked upon the initial unearthing, sustained exploration, and dissemination of the increasing number of works penned by women coming to the fore since the late seventies. The revelatory and somewhat evangelical overtones implied in this critical activity are not difficult to detect. A further stage in this process of dissemination is the appearance of translations, which are considered as the due upshot of concerted critical figurations. In their received capacity as end products of this transmission, translations have been seldom analysed within this scholarly circuit as carriers of similar tensions to the ones impinging on critical dialogue. However,

when closely examined, some of the translations in hand were found to operate according to the same forms of gendered bias or suppression from which the original works were intended to be salvaged through overtly feminist appraisals. As cultural objects re-shaped not only by the ascendancy of the original model, but by the mediating and receiving entities (the translator and the target culture respectively), translations also yielded to multiple forms of gendered partiality and oppression still operative in the receiving outlook. The thesis has aimed to disclose the often downplayed complexities and contradictions characterising those ideologically inflected instances of cultural reception and diffusion, of which the Anglo-American critical response to women-authored, contemporary narrative in Spain is a prime example.

Among the principle objectives of this thesis has been the foregrounding of translational analysis in the study of paths of cultural diffusion. While this is no longer a novel methodological proposal, most certainly within the field of translation studies, we believe that the recent impetus towards metacriticism in the field of Hispanism has to date not incorporated this recognition. The acknowledgment of the convenience of such an intersection would be mutually beneficial for both fields of enquiry. For metacritical analysis, the integration of translated texts as a variant of literary criticism would considerably expand its grounds of research and facilitate inestimable insight on the more complex and unobtrusive patterns, tendencies, and tensions that characterise cultural exchanges. For translation studies, the exploration and establishment of yet a new application of its object of analysis would significantly fortify the discipline itself, as well as the interdisciplinary bonds on which it hinges for its expansion and promotion within the current network of humanistic sciences, which has not always recognised its relevance.



## Cited References

## Primary References

Montero, Rosa (1979) *Crónica del desamor*, Madrid: Debate.

\_\_\_\_ (1981) *La función Delta*, Madrid: Debate.

\_\_\_\_ (1991a) *Absent Love: A Chronicle*, trans. and with an introduction by Cristina de la Torre and Diane Glad, London & Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

\_\_\_\_ (1991b) *The Delta Function*, trans. and with an afterword by Kari Easton and Yolanda Molina Gavilán, London & Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Rodoreda, Mercè (1962) *La plaça del Diamant*, in Mercè Rodoreda (1976) *Obres Completes I*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 351-526.

\_\_\_\_ (1966) *El carrer de les Camèlies*, in Mercè Rodoreda (1976) *Obres Completes II*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 7-181.

\_\_\_\_ (1981) *The Time of the Doves*, trans. and with an introduction by David Rosenthal, New York: Taplinger.

\_\_\_\_ (1993) *Camellia Street*, trans. and with an introduction by David Rosenthal, Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.

Tusquets, Esther (1978, c1983) *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, Barcelona: Lumen.

\_\_\_\_ (1979, c1996) *El amor es un juego solitario*, Barcelona: Anagrama.

\_\_\_\_ (1980, c1998) *Varada tras el último naufragio*, Barcelona: Anagrama.

\_\_\_\_ (1985a) *Para no volver*, Barcelona: Lumen.

\_\_\_\_ (1985b) *Love is a Solitary Game*, trans. by Bruce Penman, London/New York: John Calder/Riverrun Press.

\_\_\_\_ (1990) *The Same Sea as Every Summer*, trans. and with an introduction by Margaret E. W. Jones, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.

\_\_\_\_ (1991) *Stranded*, trans. and with an afterword by Susan E. Clark, Elmwood, IL: Dalkey Archive Press.

\_\_\_\_ (1999) *Never to Return*, trans. and with an afterword by Barbara F. Ichiishi, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.

## Secondary References

- Actes del Primer Simposi Internacional de Narrativa Breu: 1. Al voltant de la brevetat; 2. Mercè Rodoreda* (1998), V. Alonso, A. Bernal i C. Gregori (eds.), Barcelona: Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat.
- Agosin, Marjorie (1993) *Las hacedoras: mujer, imagen, escritura*, Santiago, Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio.
- Ahumada Peña, Haydée (1999) *Poder y género en la narrativa de Rosa Montero*, Madrid: Pliegos.
- Albrecht, Jane W. and Patricia Lunn (1987) 'A Note on the Language of *La plaça del Diamant*', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda* 2(2): 59-64.
- Amell, Alma (1994) *Rosa Montero's Odyssey*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Anderson, Michele (1999) 'Time within Space in Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 109-126.
- Andreu-Besó, J. Vicente (1999) 'Linguistic and Cultural Insights in Two English Translations of Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 148-155.
- Aritzeta, Margarida (1987) 'Mercè Rodoreda, el mirall i el miratge', *Serra d'Or* 337 (November): 47-91.
- Arkinstall, Christine (2004a) *Gender, Class, and Nation: Mercè Rodoreda and the Subjects of Modernism*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- \_\_\_\_ (2004b) 'Mountains, Monsters, and Maidens Without Hands: Víctor Català, Eugeni d'Ors, and Mercè Rodoreda's *Del que hom no pot fugir*', *Letras peninsulares* 15(3): 567-591.
- Arnau, Carme (1979) *Introducció a la Narrativa de Mercè Rodoreda: El mite de la infantesa*, Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- \_\_\_\_ (1987) 'El viatge iniciàtic: *Quanta, quanta guerra...* de Mercè Rodoreda', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda* 2(2): 65-82.
- \_\_\_\_ (1989) 'Mort et metamorphose: *La meva Cristina i altres contes* de Mercè Rodoreda', *Revue des Langues Romanes* 93(1): 51-60.
- \_\_\_\_ (1990) *Miralls màgics: Aproximació a l'última narrativa de Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- \_\_\_\_ and Dolores Oller (1991) 'Una conversa amb Mercè Rodoreda', *Serra d'Or* 382 (October): 19-21.
- \_\_\_\_ (1992) *Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Edicions 62.

- \_\_\_\_ (1998) 'Mercè Rodoreda, contista (1933-1974). Una aproximació a la seva evolució i influències', in *Actes del Primer Simposi Internacional de Narrativa Breu: 1. Al voltant de la brevetat; 2. Mercè Rodoreda* (1998), V. Alonso, A. Bernal i C. Gregori (eds.), Barcelona: Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Monserrat, 215-239.
- Aymerich, Pilar and Marta Pessarrodona (2002) *Mercè Rodoreda, un retrat*, Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.
- Baker, Mona (ed) (1998) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, London: Routledge
- \_\_\_\_ (2000) 'Reporting *that* in Translated English: Evidences for Subconscious Processes of Explicitation?', *Across Languages and Cultures* 1(2): 141-158.
- \_\_\_\_ (2000) 'Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator', *Target* 12(2): 241-266.
- Ball, Leah (1992) 'El lenguaje de la división y el silencio en Rodoreda', in George Cabello-Castellet, Jaume Martí-Olivella and Guy H. Wood (eds) *Cine-Lit: Essays on Peninsular Film and Fiction*, Portland: Portland State University/Oregon State University, 92-98.
- Ballester, Maria (1934) 'Del que hom no pot fugir', *Clarisme*, 2(30) (May): 4.
- Balsach, Josep M. (1993) 'Apunts entorn de l'obra pictòrica de Mercè Rodoreda', *Revista de Girona* 157 (April): 84-85.
- Barthes, Roland (1975) *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller, London: Jonathan Cape
- Baumli, Francis (1985-1986) 'Erica Jong Revisited (or) No Wonder We Men Had Trouble Understanding Feminism', *University of Dayton Review* 17(3): 91-95.
- Bellver, Catherine G. (1987) 'The Language of Eroticism in the Novels of Esther Tusquets', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 9: 13-27.
- \_\_\_\_ (2001) *Spanish Women Poets of the Twenties and Thirties*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- \_\_\_\_ (2002) 'Gender Difference and the Metafictional Gaze in Marina Mayoral's *Dar la vida y el alma*', in Ofelia Ferrán and Kathleen M. Glenn (eds.) *Women in Narrative and Film in Twentieth-Century Spain: A World of Difference(s)*, New York & London: Routledge, 184-201.
- Benet, Juan (1966) *La inspiración y el estilo*, Barcelona: Seix-Barral.
- \_\_\_\_ (1969, c1970) *Puerta de tierra*, Barcelona: Seix-Barral.
- \_\_\_\_ (1974a) *Volverás a Región*, 2nd edition, Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- \_\_\_\_ (1974b) 'Prólogo a la segunda edición', in Juan Benet, *Volverás a Región*, 2nd edition, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 7-11.
- \_\_\_\_ (1976) *En ciernes*, Madrid: Taurus.
- \_\_\_\_ (1981) *La moviola de Eurípides y otros ensayos*, Madrid: Taurus.

- \_\_\_\_ (1984) 'Foreword', in Roberto Manteiga, David K. Herzberger, and Malcolm A. Compitello (eds.) *Critical Approaches to the Writings of Juan Benet*, Hanover & London: University Press of New England, vii-viii.
- Bergman, Emilie (1987) 'Flowers at the North Pole': Mercè Rodoreda and the Female Imagination in Exile', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda* 2(2): 83-99.
- Bergman, Emilie and Paul Julian Smith (eds.) (1995) *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Bermúdez, Silvia (2002) 'Let's Talk about Sex?: From Almudena Grandes to Lucía Etxebarria, the Volatile Values of the Spanish Literary Market', in Ofelia Ferrán and Kathleen M. Glenn (eds.) *Women in Narrative and Film in Twentieth-Century Spain: A World of Difference(s)*, New York & London: Routledge, 223-237.
- Bieder, Maryellen (1999) 'Silent Women: Language in Mercè Rodoreda', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Seligrove: Susquehanna University Press, 80-97.
- Biggane, Julia (2001) Review of *Never to Return*, by Esther Tusquets (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999) in *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 78(5): 663-664.
- Boase-Beier, Jean and Michael Holman (eds.) (1999) *The Practices of Literary Translation: Constraints and Creativity*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Booth, Wayne (1974) *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bou, Enric (1994) 'Exile in the City: Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Seligrove: Susquehanna University Press, 31-41.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Braun, Friederike (1997) 'Making Men out of People: The MAN Principle in Translating Genderless Forms', in Helga Kotthoff and Ruth Wodak (eds.) *Communicating Gender in Context*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 3-29.
- Bray, Joe, Miriam Handley, and Anne C. Henry (2000a) 'Introduction', in J. Bray, Miriam Handley, and Anne C. Henry (eds.) *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page*, Aldershot: Ashgate, xvii-xxiv.
- \_\_\_\_ (eds.) (2000b) *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Briones-Barco, Ángel (2003) 'Las metaficciones de *La función Delta*', *Cincinnati Romance Review* 22: 120-130.
- Brown, Joan L. (ed) (1991) *Women Writers in Contemporary Spain: Exiles in the Homeland*, London: Associated University Presses.
- Busquets, Loreto (1987) 'The Unconscious in the Novels of Mercè Rodoreda', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda* 2(2): 101-117.

- Cabello-Castellet, George, Jaume Martí-Olivella and Guy. H. Wood (eds.) *Cine-Lit: Essays on Peninsular Film and Fiction*, Portland: Portland State University/Oregon State University.
- Calzada Pérez, María (ed.) (2003) *Apropos of Ideology: Translation Studies on Ideology- Ideologies in Translation Studies*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Campillo, Maria and Marina Gustà (1985) *Mirall trencat de Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Empúries.
- Campillo, Maria (1998) 'Mercè Rodoreda: la construcció de la veu narrativa' in *Actes del Primer Simposi Internacional de Narrativa Breu: 1. Al voltant de la brevetat; 2. Mercè Rodoreda*, V. Alonso, A. Bernal i C. Gregori (eds.), Barcelona: Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Monserrat, 323-354.
- Campmany, Maria Aurelia (1968) 'Mercè Rodoreda o les coses de la vida', *Serra d'Or* 104 (May): 47-49.
- Carbonell, Neus (1994a) 'In the Name of the Mother and Daughter: the Discourse of Love and Sorrow in Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg, (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 17-30.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1994b) *La plaça del Diamant de Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Empúries.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1995) 'L'exili en "La meva Cristina" de Mercè Rodoreda: intertextualitat i imaginació dialògica', *Lectora: revista de dones i textualitat* 1: 75-87.
- Carmona, Vicente, Jeffrey Lamb, Sherry Velasco and Barbara Zecchi (1991) 'Conversando con Mercedes Abad, Cristina Fernández Cubas y Soledad Puértolas: 'Feminismo y literatura no tiene nada que ver'', *Mester* 20(2): 157-165.
- Cavallo, Susana, Luis A. Jiménez and Oralia Preble-Niemi (eds.) (1998) *Estudios en honor a Janet Pérez: El sujeto femenino en escritoras hispánicas*, Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica.
- Casals i Couturier, Monserrat (1987) 'El "rosebud" de Mercè Rodoreda', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda* 2(2): 27-47.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1991) *Mercè Rodoreda. Contra la vida, la literatura*, Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1993) 'Pròleg' in Mercè Rodoreda (1993) *El torrent de les flors*, València: Eliseu Climent, 7-33.
- Castellanos, Jordi (1973) *Guia de la literatura catalana contemporània*, Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- Chawaf, Chantal (1976) 'La chair linguistique', trans. by Yvonne Rochette-Ozzello as 'Linguistic Flesh', in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.) (1981) *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, New York & London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 177-178.
- Chodorow, Nancy (1978) *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Chown, Linda E. (1983) 'American Critics and Spanish Women Novelists, 1942-1980', *Signs* 9(1): 91-107
- Christie, Catherine R. (1995) *The Scripted Self: Textual Identities in Contemporary Spanish Narrative*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Ciplijauskaitė, Birutė (1988) *La novela femenina contemporánea, 1970-1985: Hacia una tipología de la narración en primera persona*, Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Cisneros, Sandra (1993) 'Foreword', in Mercè Rodoreda, *Camellia Street*, trans. by David H. Rosenthal, Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, vii-xiii.
- Cixous, Hélène (1975) 'Le rire de la medusa', trans. by Keith and Paula Cohen as 'The Laugh of the Medusa', in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.) (1981) *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, New York & London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 245-264.
- Clarasó, Mercè (1980) 'The Angle of Vision in the Novels of Mercè Rodoreda', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 57: 143-152.
- Clark, Susan E. (1991) 'Afterword', in Esther Tusquets, *Stranded*, Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 227-230.
- Coates, Jennifer (1993) *Women, Men and Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London & New York: Longman.
- Collins, Jacky (2000) 'Lesbian Identity in Contemporary Spain: 'One of the Greatest Taboos Ever'', in Lesley Twomey (ed.) *Women in Contemporary Culture: Roles and Identities in France and Spain*, Bristol: Intellect Books, 127-138.
- Compitello, Malcolm Alan (1984) 'The Paradoxes of Praxis: Juan Benet and Modern Poetics' in Roberto Manteiga, David Herzberger and Malcolm A. Compitello (eds.) *Critical Approaches to the Writings of Juan Benet*, Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 8-17.
- Conte, Rafael (1983) 'Rosa Montero y la lucha por la obra', *El país*, 23 December, in S. Reisz (1995) 'Tropical como en el Trópico: Rosa Montero y el "boom" femenino hispánico de los ochenta', *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 48(1): 197.
- Cornejo-Parriego, Rosalía (1995) 'Mitología, representación e identidad en *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* de Esther Tusquets', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 20: 47-63.
- \_\_\_\_ (2003) '¿Feminismo posfeminista? Reflexiones culturales a propósito de *Recuerda, Cuerpo* de Marina Mayoral', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 80(5): 593-609.
- Cortés i Orts, Carles (1995) *Els protagonistes i el medi en la narrativa de Mercè Rodoreda: Els usos simbòlics dels elements de la natura*, Alacant: Institut de cultura Juan Gil-Albert.
- \_\_\_\_ (1998) 'La narrativa breu de Mercè Rodoreda en els anys 30', in *Actes del Primer Simposi Internacional de Narrativa Breu: 1. Al voltant de la breuetat; 2. Mercè Rodoreda*, V. Alonso, A. Bernal i C. Gregori (eds), Barcelona: Institut

- \_\_\_\_ (2000) 'La contribució crítica d'Armand Obiols i de Joan Sales en la narrativa de Mercè Rodoreda', *Journal of Catalan Studies: Revista internacional de catalanística* [online], available from <http://www.uoc.edu/jocs/4/articles/cortes7/index.html>. [accessed 8 March 2004]
- \_\_\_\_ (2002) *Començar a escriure: la construcció dels primers relats de Mercè Rodoreda (1932-1938)*, Alacant: Instituto Alicantino de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert.
- Cramer, Kathryn (2000) Review of *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, edited by Kathleen McNerney (Sellingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1999), *Modern Language Review* 95(2): 546-547.
- Crawford, Mary (1995) *Talking Difference: On Gender and Language*, London: Sage.
- Cutler, Anne (1974) 'On Saying What You Mean without Meaning What You Say', *Chicago Linguistic Society. Proceedings* 10: 117-127.
- D'Allemand, Patricia (2000) *Latin American Cultural Criticism: Re-Interpreting a Continent*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Davies, Catherine (1991) 'Feminist Writers in Spain since 1900: From Political Strategy to Personal Enquiry', in Helena Forsås-Scott (ed.) *Textual Liberation: European Feminist Writing in the Twentieth Century*, London: Routledge, 192-226.
- \_\_\_\_ (1994) *Contemporary Feminist Fiction in Spain: The Work of Monserrat Roig and Rosa Montero*, Exeter: Berg.
- De la Torre, Cristina and Diana Glad (1991) 'Introduction', in Rosa Montero, *Absent Love: a Chronicle*, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, ix-xxi.
- De Lotbinière-Harwood, Susanne (1991) *Re-belle et infidèle/The Body Bilingual*, Québec: Les éditions du remue-ménage/Women's Press.
- Díaz-Diocaretz, Myriam (1992) 'El misterio entre el comunicar y el no querer o poder decir', in Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz and Iris Zavala (eds.) *Discurso erótico y discurso transgresor en la cultura peninsular, siglos XI al XX*, Madrid: Tuero, 1-9.
- \_\_\_\_ and Iris Zavala (eds) (1992) *Discurso erótico y discurso transgresor en la cultura peninsular, siglos XI al XX*, Madrid: Tuero.
- Dolgin, Stacey (1988) 'Conversación con Esther Tusquets: Para salir de tanta miseria', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 13: 397-406.
- \_\_\_\_ (1991) 'The Aesthetic of Eroticism in *Love is a Solitary Game*', in Mary Seale Vázquez (ed.) *The Sea of Becoming: Approaches to the Fiction of Esther Tusquets*, New York: Greenwood Press, 79-92.
- \_\_\_\_ (2001) 'From the Modern to the Postmodern Novel: The Case of Esther Tusquets', *Hispanófila* 133: 43-52.

- \_\_\_\_ (2002) *Squaring the Circle: Esther Tusquets' Novelistic Tetralogy (A Jungian Analysis)*, Newark: Juan de la Cuesta.
- Donaldson, Laura E. (1988) 'The Miranda Complex: Colonialism and the Question of Feminist Reading', *Diacritics* 18(3): 65-77.
- Drinkwater, Judith (1995) 'Postmodern Identities: Writing by Women and Rosa Montero's *Amado amo*', in Catherine R. Christie, Judith Drinkwater and John Macklin, *The Scripted Self: Textual Identities in Contemporary Spanish Narrative*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 153-166.
- Durán, María Ángeles and José Antonio Rey (eds) (1987) *Literatura y vida cotidiana: Actas de las cuartas jornadas de investigación interdisciplinaria*, Zaragoza: Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.
- Easton, Kari and Yolanda Molina Gavilán (1991) 'Afterword', in Rosa Montero, *The Delta Function*, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 263-266.
- Epps, Brad (1995) 'Virtual Sexuality: Lesbianism, Loss, and Deliverance in Carme Riera's "Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora"', in Emilie Bergman and Paul Julian Smith (eds) *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 317-345.
- Erens, Pamela (1993) 'Feminism American and Un-American (on Rosa Montero)', *New England Review* 15(2): 195-200.
- Escalada, Rafael (2003) 'El nacimiento de la movida madrileña', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos: Dossier La Movida Madrileña* 636: 7-14.
- Escudero, Javier (1997) 'Rosa Montero: entre la literatura y el periodismo', *Revista de estudios hispánicos* 31(2): 327-341.
- \_\_\_\_ (1998) 'Rosa Montero y Pedro Almodóvar: miseria y estilización de "la movida" madrileña', *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 2: 147-161.
- \_\_\_\_ (2000) 'Entrevista: Rosa Montero ante la creación literaria: "Escribir es vivir"', *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 4: 211-224.
- Everly, Kathryn A. (2003) *Catalan Women Authors and Artists: Revisionist Views from a Feminist Space*, Lewisburgh: Bucknell University Press.
- Fernández, Josep-Antón (1999) 'The Angel of History and the Truth of Love: Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', *Modern Language Review* 94(1): 103-109.
- Ferrán, Ofelia and Kathleen M. Glenn (2002) 'Introduction: A World of Difference(s): Women's Narrative and Film in Twentieth-Century Spain', in Ofelia Ferrán and Kathleen M. Glenn (eds.) *Women in Narrative and Film in Twentieth-Century Spain: A World of Difference(s)*, New York & London: Routledge, xv-xix.
- Filippakopoulou, María (2003) *Reflective Operations in Edgar Allan Poe's Transatlantic Reception*, Unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.
- Folkart, Jessica A. (2002) *Angles of Otherness in Post-Franco Spain: The Fiction of Cristina Fernández Cubas*, Lewisburgh: Bucknell University Press.



- Forsås-Scott, Helena (ed.) (1991) *Textual Liberation: European Feminist Writing in the Twentieth Century*, London: Routledge.
- Fortes, Belén (ed.) (2003) *Escritas e mulleres: doce ensaios arredor de Virginia Woolf*, Santiago de Compostela: Sotelo Blanco.
- Franz, Thomas R. (1993) 'Intertexts and Allusions as Aids to Meaning in Montero's *Temblor*', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 18(2): 261-279.
- \_\_\_\_ (1997) 'Homosexuals and Bisexuals in Montero's Fiction: Diegesis and Judgement', *Hispanic Journal* 18(2): 201-213.
- Freixas, Laura (2000) *Literatura y mujeres: escritoras, público y crítica en la España actual*, Barcelona: Destino.
- Gagnon, Madeleine (1977) 'Corps I' trans. by Isabelle de Courtivron as 'Body I', in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.) (1981) *New French Feminisms*, New York & London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 179-180.
- García Mouton, Pilar (1999) *Cómo hablan las mujeres*, Madrid: Arco Libros.
- Gascón Vera, Elena (1987) 'Rosa Montero ante la escritura femenina', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 12: 59-77.
- \_\_\_\_ (1992) *Un mito nuevo: la mujer como sujeto/objeto literario*, Madrid: Pliegos.
- Gies, David T. (1999) *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar (1979) *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gilkinson, Jean (1999) 'From Taboos to Transgressions: Textual Strategies in Woman-authored Spanish Erotic Fiction', *Modern Language Review* 94(3): 718-730.
- Giora, Rachel (1995) 'On Irony and Negation', *Discourse Processes* 19: 239-264.
- Glenn, Kathleen M. (1986) 'La plaza del Diamante: The Other Side of the Story', *Letras femeninas* 12(1-2): 60-68.
- \_\_\_\_ (1987) 'Muted Voices in Mercè Rodoreda's *La meva Cristina i altres contes*', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda* 2(2): 131-142.
- \_\_\_\_ (1988) 'Reader Expectations and Rosa Montero's *La función Delta*', *Letras peninsulares* 1(1): 87-96.
- \_\_\_\_ (1990) 'Conversación con Rosa Montero', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 15(1-3): 275-288.
- \_\_\_\_ (2001) 'Voice, Marginality and Seduction in the Short Fiction of Carme Riera', in Lisa Vollendorf (ed) *Recovering Spain's Feminist Tradition*, New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 374-396.
- Godard, Barbara (1984) 'Translating and Sexual Difference', *Resources for Feminist Research* 13(3): 13-16.

- Gold, Janet N. (1987) 'Reading the Love Myth: Tusquets with the Help of Barthes', *Hispanic Review* 55: 337-346.
- González, Josefina (1999) 'Verbal Absences and Visual Silences in *Quanta, quanta guerra...*, *La mort i la primavera*, and *Isabel i Maria*' in Kathleen McNerney (ed) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 175-194.
- González Fernández, Helena (2003) 'Mulleres e ficción en Galicia ou a necesidade de superar os estados carenciais', in Belén Fortes (ed.) *Escritas e mulleres: doce ensaios arredor de Virginia Woolf*, Santiago de Compostela: Sotelo Blanco, 45-60.
- Graddol, David and Joan Swann (1989) *Gender Voices*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gready, Paul (ed) (2003) *Political Transition: Politics and Cultures*, London, Sterling & Virginia: Pluto Press.
- Grossberg, Lawrence, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler (eds.) (1992) *Cultural Studies*, New York & London: Routledge.
- Grosz, Elizabeth (1989) *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, St Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwind.
- Guerra-Cunningham, Lucía (1995) 'Silencios, disidencias y claudicaciones: Los problemas teóricos de la nueva crítica feminista', in Adelaida López de Martínez (ed.) *Discurso femenino actual*, E.E.U.U.: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1975) 'Relevant Models of Language', in Sinclair Rogers (ed) *Children and Language: Readings in Early Language and Socialization*, London: Oxford University Press, 36-49.
- \_\_\_\_ (1978) *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, London: Edward Arnold.
- Hardcastle, Anne E. (2000) 'Postmodern Fantasy and Montero's *Temblor*: The Quest for Meaning', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 25(2): 417-438.
- Harges, Mary C. (1999) 'Language and Illusion in Rosa Montero's *Bella y oscura*', *Romance Notes* 39(2): 171-175.
- \_\_\_\_ (2000) *Synergy and Subversion in the Second Stage Novels of Rosa Montero*, New York: Peter Lang Publishers.
- Harris, Derek (ed.) (1996) *Changing Times in Hispanic Culture*, Aberdeen: Centre for the Study of the Spanish Avant-Garde.
- Hart, Patricia (1994) 'More Heaven and Less Mudd: The Precedence of Catalan Unity over Feminism in Francesc Betriu's Filmic Version of Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 42-60.

- \_\_\_\_ (1997) 'Can a Good feminist Sit through Kika? Rape, Recovery, and Submission Fantasies in the Films of Almodóvar', *Anuario de cine y literatura en español* 3: 73-88.
- Hart, Stephen (1991) 'Esther Tusquets: Sex, Excess and the Dangerous Supplement of Language', *Antipodas: Journal of Hispanic Studies of the University of Auckland & La Trobe* 3: 85-98.
- \_\_\_\_ (1992) *The Other Scene: Psychoanalytic Readings in Modern Spanish and Latin-American Literature*, Colorado: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies.
- Hartman, Kabi (1999) 'Ideology, Identification and the Construction of the Feminine: *Le Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff*', *The Translator* 5(1): 61-82.
- Harvey Brown, Richard (1983) 'Dialectical Irony: Literary Form and Sociological Theory', *Poetics Today* 4(3): 543-564.
- Harvey, Keith (2003) "'Events" and "Horizons": Reading Ideology in the Bindings of Translations', in María Calzada Pérez (ed.) *Apropos of Ideology: Translation Studies on Ideology- Ideologies in Translation Studies*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 43-69.
- Hawthorne, Melanie C. (ed.) (2000) *Contingent Loves: Simone de Beauvoir and Sexuality*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia
- Hebdige, Dick (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London & New York: Methuen.
- Hetiniuk, Valerie (1999) 'Translating Woman: Reading the Female through the Male', *Meta* 44(3): 469-484.
- Herzberger, David K. (1986) 'La aparición de Juan Benet: Una nueva alternativa para la novela española', in Kathleen M. Vernon (ed.) *Juan Benet*, Madrid: Taurus, 24-44.
- Holdcroft, David (1983) 'Irony as a Trope and Irony as Discourse', *Poetics Today* 4(3): 493-511.
- Homel, David (1995) 'Tin-Fluting It: On Translating Dany Laferrière', in Sherry Simon (ed.) *Culture in Transit: Translating the Literature of Quebec*, Montréal: Véhicule Press, 47-54.
- Hooper, John (1995) *The New Spaniards*, London: Penguin.
- Hutcheon, Linda (1994) *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Huyssen, Andreas (1986) 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other', in Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 44-62.
- Ibarz, Mercè (1991) "Mercè Rodoreda, pintora", *El temps* 352: 62-65.
- \_\_\_\_ (1997a) *Mercè Rodoreda, un retrat*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- \_\_\_\_ (1997b) 'Nota a la segona edició', in Mercè Ibarz, *Mercè Rodoreda, un retrat*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 7-8.

- Ichiiishi, Barbara F. (1994) *The Apple of Earthly Love: Female Development in Esther Tusquets*, New York: Peter Lang.
- \_\_\_\_ (1999) 'Afterword' in Esther Tusquets, *Never to Return*, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 173-188.
- Irigaray, Luce (1974) *Speculum de l'autre femme*, Paris: Minuit.
- Jespersen, Otto (1922, c1950) *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin*, London: Allen & Unwin.
- Johnson, Roberta (2003) 'Spanish Feminist Theory Then and Now', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 28(1): 11-20.
- Jones, Margaret E. W. (1970) *The Literary World of Ana Matute*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- \_\_\_\_ (1974) *Dolores Medio*, New York: Twayne Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_ (1985) *The Contemporary Spanish Novel, 1939-1975*, Boston: Twayne Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_ (1990) 'Afterword' in Esther Tusquets, *The Same Sea as Every Summer*, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 185-195.
- \_\_\_\_ (1992) 'Modes of Women Communication in Spain's Narrativa Femenina', *Monographic Review* 8: 57-69.
- Kadish, Doris and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (1994) *Translating Slavery: Gender and Sex in French Women's Writing*, Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press.
- Kaufer, David (1981) 'Understanding Ironic Communication', *Journal of Pragmatics* 5: 495-510.
- \_\_\_\_ (1983) 'Irony, Interpretative Form and the Theory of Meaning', *Poetics Today* 4(3): 451-464.
- Keenaghan, Eric (1998) 'Jack Spicer's Pricks and Cocksuckers: Translating Homosexuality into Visibility', *The Translator* 4(2): 273-294.
- Kingery, Sandra (2003) 'Silencing Lesbian Desire in Ana María Moix's "Dedicatoria"', *Letras femeninas* 29(2): 45-58.
- Klaudy, Kinga (1998) 'Explicitation', in Mona Baker (ed) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, London: Routledge, 80-84.
- Knights, Vanessa (1998) 'Interview with Rosa Montero', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 4(1): 77-82.
- \_\_\_\_ (1999) *The Search for Identity in the Narrative of Rosa Montero*, Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Kotthoff, Helga and Ruth Wodak (eds.) *Communicating Gender in Context*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Krauel, Ricardo (1998) 'Funambulismo sobre la frontera de un género: ¿Una novela de Ana María Moix?', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 23(1-2): 641-653.

- Kristeva, Julia (1974) 'Oscillation du 'pouvoir' au 'refus'', trans. by Marilyn A. August as 'Oscillation between Power and Denial: An Interview with Xavière Gauthier', in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.) (1981) *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, New York & London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 165-167.
- \_\_\_\_ (1980) *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon J. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon J. Roudiez, New York: Columbia U.P.
- Labanyi, Jo (1999) 'Narrative Culture, 1975-1996', in David T. Gies (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 147-162.
- Landeira, Ricardo and Luis González del Valle (eds.) (1987) *Nuevos y Novísimos: Algunas perspectivas críticas sobre la narrativa española desde la década de los sesenta*, Colorado: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies.
- LaRocque, Paula (1995) 'Journalese: Annoying Practice Falls Short of Clarity, Communication', *Quill* 83(2): 31.
- Lecumberri, María Esther (1988) 'Siete miradas en un mismo paisaje: ¿Una novela o siete relatos?' *Monographic Review/Revista monográfica* 4: 85-96.
- Lee Six, Abigail (1996) 'Protean Prose: Fluidity of Character and Genre in Esther Tusquets's *Siete miradas en un mismo paisaje*', in Derek Harris (ed.) *Changing Times in Hispanic Culture*, Aberdeen: Centre for the Study of the Spanish Avant-Garde, 177-186.
- \_\_\_\_ (2002) 'Home and Away: *Con la miel en los labios* by Esther Tusquets in the Light of "La ciudad sin mar"', *Hispanic Research Journal* 3(1): 31-42.
- Legido-Quigley, Eva (2001) 'La superación de una 'episteme' postmoderna saturada: El caso de Belén Gopegui en *Tocarnos la cara*', *Monographic Review/Revista Monográfica* 17: 146-164.
- Levin, Gail (2001) *The Complete Oil Paintings of Edward Hopper: Commentary by Gail Levin*, Whitney Museum of American Art: New York.
- Levine, Linda Gould (1987) 'Reading, Rereading, Misreading and Rewriting the Male Canon: The Narrative Web of Esther Tusquets' Trilogy', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 12: 203-217.
- Llorca Antolín, Fina (2003) 'Narradoras catalanas: Imma Monsó', in Alicia Redondo Goicoechea (ed.) *Mujeres novelistas: Jóvenes narradoras de los noventa*, Madrid: Narcea, 163-177.
- López, Francisca (1995) *Mito y discurso en la novela femenina de posguerra en España*, Madrid: Pliegos.
- López de Martínez, Adelaida (1995) *Discurso femenino actual*, San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico.
- López García, Ángel and Ricardo Morant (1991) *Gramática femenina*, Madrid: Cátedra.

- Lunati, Monserrat (1997) 'Introduction: Women Writers in Post-Franco Spain: Writing as Transgression?', in Monserrat Lunati (ed.) *Rainy Days/Días de lluvia: Short Stories by Contemporary Spanish Women Writers*, trans. by Marilyn Myerscough, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1-26.
- \_\_\_\_ (ed.) (1997) *Rainy Days/Días de lluvia: Short Stories by Contemporary Spanish Women Writers*, trans. by Marilyn Myerscough, Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Lunn, Patricia V. and Jane W. Albrecht (1992) 'La plaça del Diamant: Linguistic Cause and Literary Effect', *Hispania: A Journal Devoted to the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese* 75(3): 492-499.
- Macchiavelli, Niccolò (1981) *The Prince and Other Political Writings*, trans. by Bruce Penman, London: Dent.
- Maier, Carol (1992) 'Siting Leticia Valle: Questions of Gender and Generation', *Monographic Review/Revista monográfica* 8: 79-98.
- Mangini, Shirley (1987) 'Women and Spanish Modernism: The Case of Rosa Chacel', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 12(3): 17-28.
- Manteiga, Roberto C., David K. Herzberger, and Malcolm A. Compitello (eds.) (1984) *Critical Approaches to the Writings of Juan Benet*, Hanover & London: University Press of New England.
- Manteiga, Roberto (1988) 'The Dilemma of Modern Woman: a Study of the Female Characters in Rosa Montero's Novels', in Roberto Manteiga, Carolyn Galerstein, and Kathleen McNerney (eds.) *Feminine Concerns in Contemporary Spanish Fiction by Women*, Potomac, Maryland: Scripta Humanistica, 113-123.
- Manteiga, Roberto, Carolyn Galerstein, and Kathleen McNerney (eds.) (1988) *Feminine Concerns in Contemporary Spanish Fiction by Women*, Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica.
- Manzoni, Alessandro (1972) *The Betrothed*, trans. and with an introduction by Bruce Penman, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Marks, Elaine and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds) (1981) *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, New York & London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf.
- Marr, M. J. (2004) 'Mapping th Space of Self: Cartography and the Narrative Act in Esther Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 29(1): 217-233.
- Marsh, Steven (2003) 'Insinuating Spaces: Memories of a Madrid Neighbourhood During the Spanish Transition', in Paul Gready (ed.) *Political Transition: Politics and Cultures*, London, Sterling & Virginia: Pluto Press, 198-211.
- Martí-Olivella, Jaume (1987a) 'Foreword', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda*, 2(2): 9-15.
- \_\_\_\_ (1987b) 'The Witches' Touch: Towards a Poetics of Double Articulation in Rodoreda', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda*, 2(2): 159-169.

- \_\_\_\_ (1999) 'Isabel i Maria: Mercè Rodoreda's Mother/Daughter Plot', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 224-239.
- Martínez Torrón, Diego (1980) 'Introducción: Juan Benet o los márgenes de la sorpresa', in Juan Benet, *Un viaje de Invierno*, Madrid: Cátedra, 11-110.
- Massardier-Kenney, Françoise (1994) 'Translation Theory and Practice', in Doris Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (1994) *Translating Slavery: Gender and Sex in French Women's Writing*, Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 11-25.
- \_\_\_\_ (1997) 'Towards a Redefinition of Feminist Translation Practice', *The Translator* 3(1): 55-69.
- Massip, Francesc and Monserrat Palau (1996) 'L'arqueta dels secrets: El teatre femení de Mercè Rodoreda', in *Actes del Xè Col·loqui Internacional de l'AILLC*, Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Monserrat, 129-141.
- \_\_\_\_ (2002) *L'obra dramàtica de Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Proa.
- Mayock, Ellen (2000) 'Black and Blue: Silence and Voice in Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', *Monographic Review* 16: 120-134.
- Mazquiarán de Rodríguez, Mercedes (1990) 'Para no volver: Humor vs. Phallocentrism', *Letras femeninas* 16(1-2): 29-35.
- \_\_\_\_ (1991a) 'Talking with Tusquets', in Mary Seale Vázquez (ed.) (1991) *The Sea of Becoming: Approaches to the Fiction of Esther Tusquets*, New York: Greenwood Press, 173-188.
- \_\_\_\_ (1991b) 'Narrative Strategies in the Novels of Esther Tusquets', *Monographic Review/Revista monográfica* 7: 124-134.
- \_\_\_\_ (2003) Review of *Correspondencia privada* by Esther Tusquets, (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2001), *Letras peninsulares* 15(2): 454-460.
- McGiboney, Donna (1994) 'Rituals and Sacrificial Rites in Mercè Rodoreda's *La mort i la primavera*', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 61-72.
- McNerney, Kathleen (1990) 'Pens and Needles: Survival Techniques of Mercè Rodoreda and Anna Murià', *Actes del Sisè Col·loqui d'Estudis Catalans a Nord-Amèrica*, Vancouver-Barcelona: PAM, 279-286.
- McNerney, Kathleen and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) (1994) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press.
- \_\_\_\_ and Cristina Enríquez de Salamanca (eds.) (1994) *Double Minorities of Spain (A Bio-Bibliographic Guide to Women Writers of the Catalan, Galician, and Basque Countries)*, New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- McNerney, Kathleen (1999) 'Introduction', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: the Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 9-21.

- \_\_\_\_ (ed) (1999) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press.
- \_\_\_\_ (2002) 'Catalan Women Writers: A Brief History', in Janet Pérez and Maureen Ihrie (eds) *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature*, Westport, Connecticut & London: Greenwood Press, 115-121.
- Melgar-Foraster, Shaudin (2001-2002) 'L'hora violeta y Para no volver: Dos lenguages, Barcelona y la mujer', *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos* 26(1-2): 155-165.
- Mencos, María Isidra (1999) 'Mercè Rodoreda and the Criticism of Her Work: Analysis and Selected Bibliography', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 240-265.
- Miguélez-Carballeira, Helena (2003) 'Language and Characterization in Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*: Towards a Third Translation into English', *The Translator* 9(1): 101-124.
- Mohino i Balet, Abraham (2002) 'L'ombra d'una mà ineffable: Cartes entre Josep Carner i Mercè Rodoreda', in Mercè Rodoreda, *Agonia de Llum: La poesia secreta de Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Angle, 233-301.
- Moi, Toril (1985) *Sexual/Textual Politics*, London & New York: Methuen.
- Moix, Ana María (1992) 'Erotismo y literatura', in Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz and Iris Zavala (eds.) *Discurso erótico y discurso transgresor en la cultura peninsular, siglos XI al XX*, Madrid: Tuerro, 199-208.
- Molas, Joaquim (1967) 'Pròleg', in Mercè Rodoreda, *La meva Cristina i altres contes*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 5-13.
- \_\_\_\_ (1969) 'Mercè rodoreda i la novel·la psicològica', *El pont* 31: 12-17.
- Molina, Ángela (2001) 'Correspondencia privada', article published in *ABC* 15/05/2001. Available from: <http://www.xtec.es/~jducros/esther%20Tusquets.html> [accessed on 9 December 2003]
- Molinaro, Nina (1991) *Foucault, Feminism and Power: Reading Esther Tusquets*, Lewisburgh, PA: Bucknell University Press.
- Montero, Rosa (2003) *La loca de la casa*, Madrid: Alfaguara.
- \_\_\_\_ (2004) ([Rosamon@telefonica.net](mailto:Rosamon@telefonica.net)), 11 March 2004. Re: Las traducciones al inglés de sus libros. Email to Helena Miguélez-Carballeira ([hmiguel@yaho.co.uk](mailto:hmiguel@yaho.co.uk)).
- Moraza, José Ignacio (1999) *Miguel Espinosa: Poder, marginalidad y lenguaje*, Kassel: Edition Reichenberger.
- Morgado, Marcia (2000) 'Yo raramente me siento culpable: Una entrevista con Esther Tusquets', *The Barcelona Review* 19 [online]. Available from: <http://www.barcelonareview.com/19/setent.htm> [accessed on 21 November 2003]



- Muecke, Douglas C. (1970/1982) *Irony and the Ironic*, London & New York: Methuen.
- Muñoz Lloret, Teresa (1992-1993) 'Entrevistes de Mercè Rodoreda a Clarisme (1933-34)', *Llengua i Literatura* 5: 495-501.
- Murià, Anna (1987) 'Mercè, o la vida dolorosa', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda*, 2(2): 17-26.
- Myers, Eunice D. (1988) 'The Feminist Message: Propaganda and/or Art? A Study of Two Novels by Rosa Montero', in Roberto Manteiga, Carolyn Galerstein and Kathleen McNerney (eds.) *Feminine Concerns in Contemporary Spanish Fiction by Women*, Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 99-112.
- \_\_\_\_ (1998) 'A modo de presentación a Janet Pérez', in Susana Cavallo, Luis A. Jiménez and Oralía Preble-Niemi (eds.) (1998) *Estudios en honor a Janet Pérez: El sujeto femenino en escritoras hispánicas*, Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, i-iv.
- Nadal, Marta (2001) *De foc i de seda. Album biogràfic de Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Fundació Mercè Rodoreda/Edicions 62.
- Nance, Kimberly A. (1991) 'Things Fall Apart: Images of Disintegration in Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', *Hispanófila* 101: 67-76.
- Navajas, Gonzalo (1987) 'Repetition and the Rhetoric of Love in Esther Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*', in Ricardo Landeira and Luis González del Valle (eds.) *Nuevos y Novísimos: algunas perspectivas críticas sobre la narrativa española desde la década de los sesenta*, Colorado: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 113-130.
- Nelson, Esther W. (1984) 'Narrative Perspective in *Volverás a Región*', in Roberto Manteiga, David Herzberger, and Malcolm A. Compitello (eds.) *Critical Approaches to the Writings of Juan Benet*, Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 27-38.
- Nichols, Geraldine C. (1986) 'Exile, Gender, and Mercè Rodoreda', *Modern Language Notes* 101: 405-417.
- \_\_\_\_ (1987) 'Sex, the Single Girl, and Other Mésalliances in Rodoreda and Laforet', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 12: 123-140.
- \_\_\_\_ (1989) *Escribir, espacio propio: Laforet, Matute, Moix, Tusquets, Riera y Roig por sí mismas*, Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literature.
- \_\_\_\_ (1992) *Des/Cifrar la diferencia: Narrativa femenina de la España contemporánea*, Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores.
- \_\_\_\_ (1993) 'Minding her P's and Q's: The Fiction of Esther Tusquets', *Indiana Journal of Hispanic Literatures* 2(1): 159-179.
- Nichols, Patricia C. (1983) 'Linguistic Options and Choices for Black Women in the Rural South', in Barry Thorne, Cheris Kramarae and Nancy Henley (eds.) *Language, Gender and Society*, Rowley: Newbury House, 54-68.
- Oliver, Joan (1936) 'Notes al lector. *Crim*', *Mirador* (October): no pages available.

- Ordóñez, Elizabeth (1987) 'Inscribing Difference: "L'écriture féminine" and New Narrative by Women', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 12: 45-58.
- \_\_\_\_ (1988) 'Rewriting Myth and History: Three Recent Novels by Women', in Roberto Manteiga, Carolyn Galerstein and Kathleen McNerney (eds.) *Feminine Concerns in Contemporary Spanish Fiction by Women*, Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 6-26.
- Oriol Giralt, Joan (1988) *Mirall trencat. Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Andros.
- Ortega, José (1983) 'Mujer, guerra y neurosis en dos novelas de Mercè Rodoreda (*La plaça del Diamant* y *El carrer de les Camèlies*)', in Janet Pérez (ed.) *Novelistas femeninas de la postguerra española*, Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, 71-84.
- Ortiz-Ceberio, Cristina (2001) 'Dos miradas en un mismo paisaje: el tratamiento del lesbianismo en *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* y *Con la miel en los labios* de Esther Tusquets', in Elizabeth Scarlett and Howard Wescott (eds.) *Convergencias Hispánicas: Selected Proceedings and Other Essays on Spanish and Latin American Literature, Film and Linguistics*, Newmark: Juan de la Cuesta, 57-68.
- Parker, Alice (1993) 'Under the Covers: A Synesthesia of Desire (Lesbian Translations)', in Susan J. Wolfe and Julia Penelope (eds.) *Sexual Practice/Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism*, Cambridge, MA & Oxford: Blackwell, 322-339.
- Pastor, Albert (1994) 'Araceli Bruch i *La sala de les nines*', *Dona i teatre: ara i aquí*, Barcelona: Institut Català de la Dona, 125-130.
- Penman, Bruce (1972) 'Introduction', in Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, trans. by Bruce Penman, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 7-14.
- \_\_\_\_ (1981) 'Introduction', in Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and Other Political Writings*, trans. by Bruce Penman, London: Dent, 1-22.
- Pérez, Janet (ed) (1983) *Novelistas femeninas de la postguerra española*, Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas.
- \_\_\_\_ (1991) 'Time and Symbol, Life and Death, Decay and Regeneration: Vital Cycles and the Round of Seasons in Mercè Rodoreda's *La mort i la primavera*', *Catalan Review* 5(1): 179-196.
- \_\_\_\_ (1993) 'Presence of the Picaresque and the Quest Romance in Mercè Rodoreda's *Quanta, quanta guerra...*', *Hispania: A Journal Devoted to the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese* 76(3): 428-438.
- \_\_\_\_ (2002) Review of *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda* edited by Kathleen McNerney (Sellingrove: Susquehanna University press, 1999), *Hispanic Review* 70: 124-125.
- \_\_\_\_ and Maureen Ihrie (eds.) (2002) *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature*, Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press.
- \_\_\_\_ (2003) 'Tradition, Renovation, Innovation: The Novels of Belén Gopegui', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 28(1): 115-138.

- Perriam, Chris, Michael Thompson. Susan Frenk and Vanessa Knights (2000) *A New History of Spanish Writing, 1939-1990*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pertusa, Immaculada (1999-2000) 'El mismo mar de todos los veranos y el poder subversivo de la confesión', *Antipodas: Journal of Hispanic and Galician Studies* 11-12: 125-141.
- Pessarrodona, Marta (1983) 'Les dones a l'obra de Mercè Rodoreda', *Serra d'Or* 290 (November): 17-19.
- \_\_\_\_ (2003) 'Ahora que han pasado veinte años (Recuerdo de Mercè Rodoreda)', *Revista de Occidente* 271 (December): 134-137.
- Poch i Bullich, Joaquim and Conxa Planas i Planas (1987) 'El fet femení en els textos de Mercè Rodoreda (una reflexió des de la psicoanàlisi)', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda* 2(2): 199-224.
- Pollock, Mary S. (1998) 'The Raw Edges of the Mind: Sandra Cisneros Reads Mercè Rodoreda', *Catalan Review* 12(1): 87-100.
- Pope, Randolph (1991) 'Mercè Rodoreda's Subtle Greatness', in Joan L. Brown (ed.) *Women Writers in Contemporary Spain: Exiles in the Homeland*, London: Associated University Presses, 116-135.
- \_\_\_\_ (1994) 'Aloma's Two Faces and the Character of Her True Nature' in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 135-147.
- \_\_\_\_ (2003) 'A Criticism of Our Own', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 28(1): 21-27.
- Porcel, Baltasar (1966) 'Mercè Rodoreda o la força lírica', *Serra d'Or* 3 (March): 71-75.
- Porta, Roser (1998) 'Mercè Rodoreda i el periodisme satíric: Clarisme i El Be Negre (1933-1935)', *Serra d'Or* 463-464 (July-August): 52-54.
- Postlewaite, Marisa (2002) 'The Use of the Detective Story Framework as a (Pre)text for Self-Realisation in *La hija del caníbal*', *Letras femeninas* 28(1): 131-146.
- Radway, Janice (1992) 'Mail-Order Culture and its Critics: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Commodification and Consumption, and the Problem of Authority', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler (eds) *Cultural Studies*, New York & London: Routledge, 512-527.
- Redondo Goicoechea, Alicia (2003) 'Los modelos de mujer de Lucía Etxebarria', in Alicia Redondo Goicoechea (ed.) *Mujeres novelistas: Jóvenes narradoras de los noventa*, Madrid: Narcea, 109-121.
- \_\_\_\_ (ed.) (2003) *Mujeres novelistas: Jóvenes narradoras de los noventa*, Madrid: Narcea.
- Reisz, Susana (1995) 'Tropical como en el Trópico: Rosa Montero y el "boom" femenino hispánico de los ochenta', *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 48(1): 189-204.

- Renner, Rolf Günter (1990) *Edward Hopper 1882-1967: Transformation of the Real*, trans. by Michael Hulse, Köln: Benedikt Taschen.
- Resina, Joan Ramon (1987) 'The Link in Conscious: Time and Community in Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', *Catalan Review: Homage to Mercè Rodoreda*, 2(2): 225-246.
- \_\_\_\_ (1994) 'Detective Formula and Parodic Reflexivity: *Crim*', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 119-134.
- \_\_\_\_ (2000) 'Hi ha futur per als estudis catalans a l'Amèrica del Nord?', *Catalan Review* 14 (1-2): 17-33.
- Resnick, Margery and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.) (1984) *Women Writers in Translation: An Annotated Bibliography 1945-1982*, New York: Garland Press.
- Rhodes, Elizabeth (1994) 'The Salamander and The Butterfly', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 162-187.
- Riera, Carme (1982) 'Literatura femenina: ¿un lenguaje prestado?', *Quimera* 18: 9-12.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith (1983) *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Rivera, Nelson (1989) 'El derrumbamiento de un publicista' (reseña de *Amado amo*), *El Diario de Caracas*, 29 de Enero, in Susana Reisz (1995) 'Tropical como en el Trópico: Rosa Montero y el "boom" femenino hispánico de los ochenta', *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 58(1): 193
- Robles, Adela (1999) 'The Question of Space in *La plaça del Diamant*', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 127-147.
- Rodoreda, Mercè (1967a) *La meva Cristina i altres contes*, in Mercè Rodoreda (1976) *Obres Completes II*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 183-291.
- \_\_\_\_ (1967b) *The Pigeon Girl*, trans. by Eda O'Shiel, London: Andre Deutsch.
- \_\_\_\_ (1974) 'Pròleg a *Mirall trencat*', in Mercè Rodoreda (1976) *Obres Completes III*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 13-32.
- \_\_\_\_ (1976) *Obres Completes*, vols. I, II, III, Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- \_\_\_\_ (1980a, c2000) 'Pròleg a *Quanta, quanta guerra...*' in Mercè Rodoreda, *Quanta, quanta guerra...*, Barcelona: Club Editor, 13-24.
- \_\_\_\_ (1980b, c2000) *Quanta, quanta guerra...*, Barcelona: Club Editor.
- \_\_\_\_ (1984) *My Christina and Other Stories*, trans. and with an introduction by David Rosenthal, Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.
- \_\_\_\_ (1985) *Cartes a l'Anna Murià, 1939-1956*, edició a cura d'Isabel Segura, Barcelona: LaSal, Edicions de les Dones.

- \_\_\_\_ (1986, c2000), *La mort i la primavera*, Barcelona: Club Editor.
- \_\_\_\_ (1993) *El torrent de les flors*, València: Eliseu Climent, Editor.
- \_\_\_\_ (2002) *Agonia de Llum: La poesia secreta de Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Angle.
- Rogers, Sinclair (ed.) (1975) *Children and Language: Readings in Early Language and Socialization*, London: Oxford University Press
- Romaní, Ana (2003) 'As papoulas, o xardín e outros rubores ou sobre o anxo da casa e as literaturas: apuntamentos e outras retóricas sobre as mulleres e as literaturas', in Belén Fortes (ed.) *Escritas e mulleres: doce ensaios arredor de Virginia Woolf*, Santiago de Compostela: Sotelo Blanco, 145-149.
- Romero, Isabel *et al* (1987) 'Feminismo y literatura: la narrativa de los años setenta', in María Ángeles Durán and José Antonio Rey (eds.) *Literatura y vida cotidiana: Actas de las cuartas jornadas de investigación interdisciplinaria*, Zaragoza: Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 337-357.
- Rorty, Richard (1989) *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosales Sequeiros, Xosé (2002) 'Interlingual Pragmatic Enrichment in Translation', *Journal of Pragmatics* 34: 1069-1089.
- Rose, Marilyn Gaddis (1997) *Translation and Literary Criticism*, Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Rosenthal, David (1981) 'Translator's Note', in Mercè Rodoreda, *The Time of the Doves*, New York: Taplinger, 7-11.
- \_\_\_\_ (1984) 'Translator's Foreword', in Mercè Rodoreda, *My Christina and Other Stories*, Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, vii-xii.
- \_\_\_\_ (1992) 'Preface', in Víctor Català, *Solitude: A Novel of Catalonia*, trans. by David Rosenthal, London: Readers International, 5-8.
- \_\_\_\_ (1993) 'Translator's Introduction', in Mercè Rodoreda, *Camellia Street*, Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, xv-xx.
- Rueda, Ana (1994) 'Mercè Rodoreda: From Traditional Tales to Modern Fantasy', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selingsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 201-222.
- Saladrigas, Robert (1983) 'Con la vana ilusión de un bolero' (Reseña de *Te trataré como a una reina*), *La Vanguardia*, 15 December, in S. Reisz (1995) 'Tropical como en el Trópico: Rosa Montero y el "boom" femenino hispánico de los ochenta', *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 58(1): 197.
- Saludes, Isabel (1991) 'Mercè Rodoreda: un ram de flors transparents', *Serra d'Or* 376 (April 1991): 43-48.
- Saludes i Amat, Anna Maria (1993) 'Una passió secreta de Mercè Rodoreda: el teatre', *Revista de Catalunya* 76 (July-August): no pages available.
- \_\_\_\_ (1995) 'Mercè Rodoreda, periodista', *Serra d'Or* 423 (March): 56-59.

- Sanz-Villanueva, Santos (1997) 'Introducción', in Esther Tusquets, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, Madrid: Castalia, 7-38.
- Scarlett, Elizabeth (1994a) 'Vinculada a les flors': Flowers and the Body in *Jardí vora el mar* and *Mirall trencat*', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 73-84.
- \_\_\_\_ (1994b) *Under Construction: The Body in Spanish Novels*, Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia.
- \_\_\_\_ and Howard Wescott (2001) (eds.) *Convergencias Hispánicas: Selected Proceedings and Other essays on Spanish and Latin American Literature, Film and Linguistics*, Newmark: Juan de la Cuesta.
- Schomp, Claire (2002) 'Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire': Representations and Translations', Karen Vandervelde (ed.) *New Voices in Irish Criticism* 3, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 165-172.
- Schumm, Sandra J. (1999) *Reflections in Sequence: Novels by Spanish Women, 1944-1988*, Lewisburgh: Bucknell University Press.
- Servodidio, Mirella (1987) 'A Case of Pre-Oedipal and Narrative Fixation: *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 12: 157-174.
- S'Hiri, Sonia (1992) *Verbal irony in Literary Discourse: A Pragmatic-Stylistic Study with Particular Emphasis on Contemporary Narrative Fiction*, Unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.
- Shuttleworth, Mark and Moira Cowie (1997) *Dictionary of Translation Studies*, Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Simon, Sherry (ed.) (1995) *Culture in Transit: Translating the Literature of Quebec*, Montréal: Véhicule Press.
- \_\_\_\_ (1996) *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, London: Routledge.
- Simons, Margaret A. (1983) 'The Silencing of Simone de Beauvoir. Guess What's Missing from *The Second Sex*', *Women's Studies International Forum* 6(5): 559-564.
- Smith, Paul Julian (1992) *Laws of Desire: Questions of Homosexuality in Spanish Writing and Film, 1960-1990*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- \_\_\_\_ and Emilie Bergman (1995) 'Introduction', in Emilie Bergman and Paul Julian Smith (eds.) *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1-14.
- \_\_\_\_ (2002) '70s Revival: Tusquets Replays Lesbianism', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 79(3): 337-343.
- Sobejano-Morán, Antonio (1994) 'Modalidades discursivas en la ficción posmoderna española', *Nueva revista de filología hispánica* 43(1): 37-58.

- Sobrer, Josep Miguel (1994) 'Gender and Personality in Rodoreda's Short Fiction', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 188-200.
- Soldevila-Durante, Ignacio (1990) 'Sobre la escritura femenina y su reivindicación en el conjunto de la historia de la literatura contemporánea (A propósito de un reciente libro de Janet Pérez)', *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos* 14(3): 606-616.
- Soldevila, Llorenç (2000) *Una novel·la son paraules: Introducció a l'obra de Mercè Rodoreda*, Barcelona: Proa.
- Soldevila i Balart, Llorenç (2002) 'Pròleg', in Carles Cortés (2002) *Començar a escriure: la construcció dels primers relats de Mercè Rodoreda (1932-1938)*, Alacant: Instituto Alicante de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert, 9-11.
- Sontag, Susan (1983) 'Writing Itself: on Roland Barthes', in Susan Sontag (ed) *Barthes: Selected Writings*, Oxford: Fontana/Collins, vi-xxxviii.
- \_\_\_\_ (ed.) (1983) *Barthes: Selected Writings*, Oxford: Fontana/Collins.
- Speer, Susan A. (2002) 'Sexist Talk: Gender Categories, Participants' Orientations and Irony', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 6(3): 347-377.
- Sperber, Dan and Deidre Wilson (1986) *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Spires, Robert C. (1984) 'Juan Benet's Poetics of Open Spaces', in Roberto Manteiga, David Herzberger and Malcolm A. Compitello (eds.) *Critical Approaches to the Writings of Juan Benet*, Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 1-7.
- Susam-Sarajeva, Şebnem (2002) *Translation and Travelling Theory: The Role of Translation in the Migration of Literary Theories Across Culture and Power Differentials*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, London.
- \_\_\_\_ (2003) 'Multiple-Entry Visa to Travelling Theory: Retranslations of Literary and Cultural Theories', *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies* 15(1): 1-36.
- Tannen, Deborah (1989) *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tasis, Rafael (1934) 'Mercè Rodoreda. Un dia en la vida d'un home', *Mirador* 304 (November): no pages available.
- Templin, Charlotte (1997) 'Mass Culture, Gender and Cultural Authority: the Reception of Erica Jong's *How to Save your Own Life*', *The Centennial Review* 38(1): 95-110
- Terry, Arthur (2003) *A Companion to Catalan Literature*, Woodbridge: Tamesis.
- Tittler, Jonathan (1984) *Narrative Irony in the Contemporary Spanish-American Novel*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.

- Thorne, Barrie, Cheris Kramarae and Nancy Henley (eds) (1983) *Language, Gender and Society*, Rowley: Newbury House.
- Tobin Stanley, Maureen (2003) 'La castración y la prepotencia del falo: Una interpretación psicoanalítica de los dos matrimonios de Natalia/Colometa en *La plaza del Diamante* de Mercè Rodoreda', *Cincinnati Romance Review* 22: 131-147.
- Trabal, Francesc (1938) 'Salut, Aloma!', *Meridià* 25 (July): no pages available.
- Triadú, Joan (1973) '*La plaça del Diamant* de Mercè Rodoreda', in Jordi Castellanos (ed.) *Guia de la literatura catalana contemporània*, Barcelona: Ed. 62: 403-407.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2000) 'Actualitat de Mercè Rodoreda', *Serra d'Or* 485 (May): 70-72.
- Tsuchiya, Akiko (1992) 'Theorizing the Feminine: Esther Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* and Hélène Cixous's *écriture féminine*', *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 26(2): 183-199.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2003) 'Women and Fiction in Post-Franco Spain', in Harriet Turner and Adelaida López de Martínez (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel: From 1600 to the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 212-230.
- Turner, Harriet and Adelaida López de Martínez (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel: From 1600 to the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tusquets, Esther (1997b) *Con la miel en los labios*, Barcelona: Anagrama.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2001) *Correspondencia privada*, Barcelona: Anagrama.
- Twomey, Lesley (ed.) (2000) *Women in Contemporary Culture: Roles and Identities in France and Spain*, Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Ugarte, Michael (1999) 'Working at a Discount: Class Consciousness in Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', *Modern Language Notes* 114 (2): 297-314.
- Vanderauwera, Ria (1985) *Dutch Novels Translated into English: The Transformation of a "Minority" Literature*, Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Vandervelde, Karen (ed) (2002) *New Voices in Irish Criticism* 3, Dublin: Four Courts Press.
- van Lawick, Heike (1998) 'Les traduccions a l'alemany dels contes de Mercè Rodoreda', in *Actes del Primer Simposi Internacional de Narrativa Breu: 1. Al voltant de la breuetat; 2. Mercè Rodoreda* (1998), V. Alonso, A. Bernal i C. Gregori (eds.), Barcelona: Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Monserrat, 355-376.
- Varderi, Alejandro (1999) 'A la recherche d'*Isabel i Maria* (In the Garden of Childhood with Rodoreda and Proust)', in Kathleen McNerney, (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 208-223.



- Vásquez, Mary Seale (1988) 'Tusquets, Fitzgerald and the Redemptive Power of Love', *Letras Femeninas* 14(1-2): 10-21.
- \_\_\_\_ (ed.) (1991) *The Sea of Becoming: Approaches to the Fiction of Esther Tusquets*, New York: Greenwood Press.
- Vernon, Kathleen M. (ed.) *Juan Benet*, Madrid: Taurus.
- Vermeer, Hans J. (1989) 'Skopos and Commission in Translational Action', in Andrew Chesterman (ed.) *Readings in Translation Theory*, Helsinki: Finn Lectura.
- \_\_\_\_ (1996) *A Skopos Theory of Translation: Some Arguments For and Against*, Heidelberg: Textcontext.
- Villalta, Luísa (2003) 'Por que os homes non nos len?', in Belén Fortes (ed.) *Escrita e mulleres: doce ensaios arredor de Virginia Woolf*, Santiago de Compostela: Sotelo Blanco, 61-84.
- Villán, Javier (1983) "Te trataré como a una reina" (Reseña), *La mañana*, 26 de Noviembre, Lérida, in S. Reisz (1995) 'Tropical como en el Trópico: Rosa Montero y el "boom" femenino hispánico de los ochenta', *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 58(1): 197.
- Voldeng, Evelyne (1984) 'Translata/Latus', *Room of One's Own: A Feminist Journal of Literature and Criticism* 8(4): 82-96.
- Vollendorf, Lisa (1999) 'Exchanging Terms: Toward the Feminist Fantastic in *Mirall trencat*', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 156-174.
- von Flotow, Luise (1997) *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'*, Manchester: St. Jerome.
- \_\_\_\_ (2000) 'Translation Effects: How Beauvoir Talks Sex in English', in Melanie C. Hawthorne (ed.) *Contingent Loves: Simone de Beauvoir and Sexuality*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 13-33.
- Vosburg, Nancy (1994) 'The Roots of Alienation: Rodoreda's *Viatges i flors*', in Kathleen McNerney and Nancy Vosburg (eds.) *The Garden across the Border: Mercè Rodoreda's Fiction*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 148-161.
- \_\_\_\_ (1999) 'Reflections: Spaces of Self-Knowledge in Rodoreda's Fiction', in Kathleen McNerney (ed.) *Voices and Visions: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, Selvingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 63-79.
- Walker, Nancy A. (1990) *Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women*, Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi.
- Wallach-Scott, Joan (1999) *Gender and the Politics of History: Revised Edition*, Chichester: Columbia University Press.
- Whyte, Christopher (2002) 'Against Self-Translation', *Translation and Literature* 11(1): 64-71.

- Wolfe, Susan and Julia Penelope (eds.) (1993) *Sexual Practice/ Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism*, Cambridge, MA & Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wyers, Frances (1983) 'A Woman's voices: Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*', *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 30: 301-309
- Zatlin, Phyllis (1987) 'Women Novelists in Democratic Spain: Freedom to Express the Female Perspective', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 12(1): 29-44.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1:

Los tres meses de verano son, por lo general, rigurosamente secos. Sólo en las zonas altas de montaña se mantienen los pastos: la totalidad del páramo en diez días de sol de mayo o junio queda más seco, hirsuto y apagado de color que un estropajo olvidado en el antepecho de una ventana. Tampoco hay higrómetros pero es tal la sequedad de la atmósfera y tan violenta la evaporación (cuando la calina hace temblar la silueta de la sierra) que los perros que mueren en esas semanas ardientes (y a veces mueren ahorcados, para colgar de los árboles, como sacos de grano, todos los paquetes viscerales acumulados en los cuartos traseros) se momifican en un par de noches y se conservan amojamados durante toda la época seca para servir de alimento a las alimañas que bajan del monte con las primeras nieves. Porque en verano allí sólo vuelan los insectos: ese monte bajo, cubierto de brezo, carquesas y roble enano que no da sombra, guarda e irradia de tal forma el calor que los jóvenes y desprevenidos aguiluchos y cornejas que, abandonando sus frescas alturas, bajan al páramo en busca de comida (aromas sofocantes, vapores tósigos, misteriosos destellos) pierden a menudo sus sentidos y caen desvanecidos para servir de instantáneo pasto a un enjambre de moscas zumbantes, azuladas, plateadas que pueden devorarlo en menos de una hora con el frenesí y el fragor de una lluvia de cationes. (Benet 1974a: 48-49)

## Appendix 2:

Y –un poco más allá- el segundo vértice del mágico triángulo de mi infancia desaparece casi en el gris de las aguas: es un vértice oscuro, casi sin luces propias, y se esfuma, como se está esfumando el día, entre las olas. Este segundo vértice es una gruta sombría: seis peldaños y un mundo de sordos recovecos. Buceas, te sumerges, y ya en lo hondo, al volverte hacia arriba y hacia atrás, ves los ríos de luz esmeralda

que descienden magníficos hasta las profundidades, nunca tan bella la superficie radiante del mar como vista invertida, desde abajo, desde las profundas simas de una gruta marina, que a esta hora, aplacadas ya las esmeraldas, hace doblemente sombrías las sombras. La gruta está repleta de mohosos estantes que desbordan tesoros. Maravilla de cajas candarache de treinta y seis colores, y todos diferentes, aunque sólo son siete los colores del arco iris y con ellos si quieres pueden conseguirse los demás, por lo que la exuberancia de los treinta y seis lápices distintos adquiere un matiz de derroche ostentoso, de exceso casi pecaminoso y exótico –y todavía hoy no puedo pasar sin detenerme ante un escaparate donde se exhiba una caja de lápices candarache con sus treinta y seis colores-; lujuriosos juegos de compases adormecidos en su plata sobre el más negro o grana de los terciopelos, prontos a salir de su ensueño para crear un universo extraño de círculos imposibles; gomas muy grandes, muy blandas, de contornos suaves y redondeados, sobre las que se agitan muellemente Blancanieves y los Siete Enanitos y el Príncipe Encantador –siempre un poquito bobo aunque no sea esta vez el más tonto, ni tampoco el más bello de los príncipes-; series completas de postales de arte, con hipódromos y señoras gordas rodeadas de niñitos rubios, y señoras, también rubias, con pamelas enormes, esas señoras de las que mamá dirá que tienen mucha clase, y jarrones que estallan en flores multicolores –que no huelen a nada-, y perritos de lujo con cara de no muy listos y lacitos azules... (Tusquets 1979: 32-33)

### **Appendix 3**

Elia ha pasado todo el fin de semana en casa, casi sin moverse de la cama ni salir de la alcoba, desde la versión libérrima de la escena del sofá que interpretaron a dúo para recíproco deleite el viernes hasta la cita pospuesta caprichosamente, voluptuosamente, perversamente para la mañana del lunes, tal vez en un intento de tranquilizar los últimos miedos que adivina todavía en Ricardo, poniéndoselo de modo artificioso en el último instante un poco, sólo un poco más difícil, ni siquiera eso, más fácil en realidad al mostrarse ella menos ansiosa, menos voraz y agresiva, más serena y protectora, en su supuesta no impaciencia, pero pospuesta ante todo

hasta el lunes para mimar y prolongar –para su propio placer, para su propia tortura– esta ansiedad deleitosa e intolerable, esa intensidad de la imaginación y de los sentidos que constituye acaso la única evasión, la única embriaguez de la que Elia –una Elia que sabe no pueden conmoverla el dinero ni el prestigio y que no le significan apenas nada los privilegios de clase, (...) y no puede dar siquiera importancia, no puede tomar siquiera en serio, lo que otros consideran su atractivo, porque ni vanidosa es a fuer de indiferente, y además en el fondo esa belleza zanjilarga y pelirroja hecha de reminiscencias infantiles y evocaciones adolescentes no coinciden demasiado con la imagen que ella fantasea de sí misma, y le causa a menudo un sobresalto incómodo el verse reflejada de repente en un espejo, (...) y acaso se deba todo a que de muy niña le dijeron que lo suyo era el matrimonio y la cultura general, o a que en cualquier caso no tuvo luego el coraje, el ánimo o las ganas para salirse de esto (que otras, pocas, sí lo tuvieron), (...) y Elia no ha querido o no ha podido hacer de los dos niños la razón de su vida y ¿cómo hacer de los hijos la razón de una vida, cuando sabes que luego crecen y en seguida se alejan, y sabes sobre todo que la vida es de ellos y para ellos, y no para que se la apropie en sus inicios esa hembra melancólica e insatisfecha, caprichosa e inútil, que malcumple quizá sus funciones de madre, pero que no quiere cometer al menos contra ellos el supremo delito de usurpar, devorar, vampirizar existencias ajenas?, y no ha sido capaz tampoco Elia del empuje o de la fe suficientes para militar en nada, inconsistente desde la infancia la religión, demasiado lúcida para ejercer la filantropía o cualquier tipo de beneficencia sin morir de vergüenza, y demasiado cobarde o perezosa o meramente apática para intentar cambiar en serio nada; ella que ni capaz es ya de alterar el orden absurdo de la casa, el ritmo de su vida o el veraneo de los niños–, esta intensidad pues de la imaginación y de los sentidos –sólo muy remotamente relacionable con el sexo–que constituye la única embriaguez, la única evasión, de la que Elia ha sido desde siempre capaz, desde la infancia ya y seguramente hasta su muerte (...). (Tusquets 1979: 62-64)

Elia spent the whole weekend indoors, hardly stirring from her bed during the three days that separated Friday's performance on the sofa (a broadly conceived scene for two which both had enjoyed) from the next little drama, which she had capriciously, voluptuously, perversely postponed until Monday morning. She had done so partly in order to still the last fears which she could see were still troubling Ricardo by artificially making things a little, just a very little, more difficult for him at the last moment; although in another sense she was making things easier for him by showing herself less impatient, less anxious, greedy and aggressive, and more serene and protective. The main object of the postponement, however, was to enable her to savour and prolong –for her own pleasure, for her own torment– that delightful yet intolerable excitement, that intensity of the imagination and the senses, which were probably Elia's only means of escape, the only form of intoxication of which she had always been capable. Elia knows that money and prestige cannot move her, and that the privileges of class mean almost nothing to her, (...). Another thing she can't take seriously or regard as important is her own appearance, what other people call her beauty. She is too indifferent to be vain; and in any case the leggy, red-headed good looks, with their evocations of childhood and adolescence, do not really coincide with her own imaginary picture of herself, so that she often has a shock when she unexpectedly comes up against a mirror. (...) but Elia knows that it is merely evidence of her lack of ability, which may be due to the fact that they told her when she was very young that her future would be one of marriage and general culture and that she would never have the courage, determination or enthusiasm which enabled a very small minority of women to break out of that circle. (...) while Elia couldn't or wouldn't make her two children the central purpose of her life. How can you make your children the central purpose of your life, knowing perfectly well they'll soon grow up and leave you, and also knowing that their life is for them to live, and not to be scooped up and appropriated in its early stages by a parent as melancholy [melancholic] and dissatisfied, as capricious and ineffective, as yourself? You may be a bad mother, but you don't want to commit the ultimate crime of usurping,

absorbing, vampirising the very existence of two other human beings. Elia has never had the faith and the driving force to make her a militant supporter of any cause. From a very early age, she has had no strong religious beliefs. She is too clear-sighted to be able to engage in philanthropy or any form of good works without dying of shame. She is too cowardly or lazy –or perhaps just too apathetic– to make a serious attempt to change anything. She can't even change the rythm of her own life, the absurd arrangement of the furniture in her house, or the plans for the children's summer holidays.

Against this background, the intensisty of her imagination and her senses to which we have already referred, and which had little enough to do with sex, was indeed the only escape, the only intoxication of which Elia had ever been capable since her childhood, or of which she ever would be capable until her death. (Tusquets 1985b: 58-60)